

Open Research Online

The Open University's repository of research publications and other research outputs

Crossing the Borders: The Challenge of Advanced Skills Teachers' Outreach Work in Other Schools

Thesis

How to cite:

Cooper, Deborah Anne (2008). Crossing the Borders: The Challenge of Advanced Skills Teachers' Outreach Work in Other Schools. EdD thesis The Open University.

For guidance on citations see [FAQs](#).

© 2008 The Author



<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Version: Version of Record

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:

<http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21954/ou.ro.0000f286>

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online's data [policy](#) on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.

oro.open.ac.uk

Deborah Anne Cooper

Crossing the borders: the challenge of Advanced Skills
Teachers' outreach work in other schools

Doctorate in Education
2008

DATE OF SUBMISSION: 2008

DATE OF AWARD: MAY 2008

ProQuest Number: 13837720

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



ProQuest 13837720

Published by ProQuest LLC (2019). Copyright of the Dissertation is held by the Author.

All rights reserved.

This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 – 1346

Acknowledgements

When the amendments got me down, I was inspired by Maureen Rees, who passed her driving test after eight attempts.

My thanks to:

Dr John Butcher, Supervisor

Erik Kowal and Paula Davies, for editing

All the teachers who generously shared their experiences

Special thanks to:

My patient and wonderfully supportive family - especially Jan

Dedication

To Caroline Roaf, a mentor and role model to many, who showed me kindness, inspiration and encouragement in my first teaching job.

Abstract

Crossing the borders: the challenge of Advanced Skills Teachers' outreach work in other schools

Most teachers work in isolation (Hargreaves, A 1994). Although joint work among teachers is recognized as a factor in internal school improvement, less is known about teacher perspectives of collaborative practice which crosses the borders between schools.

During the time frame of this study, 2003-2007, policies to encourage partnership and collaboration between schools were based on assumptions that teacher good practice could be transferred and this would be for the benefit of area wide improvement. Thus, inter-school collaboration was usually presented in positive terms of modernization. In contrast, this study does not present a blue-skies version of collaboration but looks at the challenges.

This small-scale qualitative study examines how teachers work in other schools. It is presented as a case-study of the outreach responsibilities of secondary Advanced Skills Teachers in two shire local authorities, based on interview and observation data. In England, Advanced Skills Teachers are promoted for their excellent contribution to teaching and support to other colleagues. A key idea behind the scheme was to provide an alternative promotion route by retaining good teachers in the classroom. These teachers are based in their home school and spend 20% of their time supporting colleagues in other schools on outreach. A key research question is: what is outreach? The study considers why ASTs were introduced and looks at outreach as a distinctive model of professional development.

As the AST scheme got under way, outreach was reported to be a difficult part of the role, seen especially in local authority co-ordination of access to schools and the inappropriate use of ASTs as supply teachers. (Ofsted 2001)

This research looks at the exact nature of the challenges of outreach from an AST perspective and how ASTs worked with other professionals in other school contexts. It uses concepts of reflective practice. This study was influenced by the emerging work of Fielding et al (2005) who investigated the factors influencing transfer and found that a relationship model was important and that rather than a one-way transfer, “joint practice development” was a more appropriate term.

Outreach was found to be a challenging new aspect of the teacher role. In the words of one respondent: “*ASTs are in the vanguard and that is never a comfortable place to be.*” For ASTs, outreach was frequently a stimulating part of the role providing renewed enthusiasm. The findings show a wide range of outreach work involving varying degrees of tension for ASTs and for different purposes in different local contexts. Outreach was limited by inappropriate timetable, or lack of support from head teachers or local authorities. ASTs demonstrated collegiality across schools as a way to offer support and overcome early derogatory images of ‘super teachers’. ASTs made considerable use of informal networks to advertise their availability for outreach. Some ASTs worked in project groups and this has further potential for challenging stereo-types of good and bad schools, opening up classrooms and crossing borders.

Table of Contents

Page No

Chapter 1

Introduction

Who are Advanced Skills Teachers?	1
Researching a live policy: national standards for ASTs	4
Rationale for the study of outreach	5
Rationale for the research questions	8
Rationale for grounded methodology	12
Development of theoretical frameworks	14
Reflective practitioner	14
Context	15
Collaboration	16

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Chapter Overview	19
Key concept: context	20
Key concept: Reflective practice	25
Related literature on mentoring, coaching and advisory teachers	30
Key concept: Collaboration	35
Associated concepts: collegiality and autonomy	41
Associated literature: teacher leadership	44
Associated literature: communities and networks	46

Chapter 3

Methodology

Chapter Overview	54
Rationale of methodology	54
The role of the researcher	60
The ASTs respondents in this study	62
Observation	65
Interviews	68
Questionnaires	71
Data Analysis	73
Gaining access as a researcher	76
Contrast with paid work as a researcher	77
Consideration of alternative methodologies and potential follow-up studies	78
Minimising bias	82
Ethics	83

Chapter 4

What is outreach?

Chapter Overview	86
Research context	86
The Local Authority context	87

Local authority evaluation of outreach	90
Range of outreach work	93
Vignette: solo AST outreach	97
Benefits	100
Challenges	103
Discussion of chapter 4 findings	107

Chapter 5

How do ASTs work with other professionals in other contexts?

Chapter overview	114
ASTs demonstrating collegiality	114
AST use of informal networks for outreach	121
Challenges to AST autonomy in outreach	124
Vignette: emergency context of outreach at visit to ASTs at a school in special measures	127
Discussion of findings in this chapter	128

Chapter 6

How does outreach relate to other collaborative work?

Chapter overview	136
Outreach and other collaborative work	136
Local authority deployment of ASTs to schools in special measures	138
Vignette: Collaborative model of AST Science Groups in Hillshire	142
Discussion of findings in this chapter	144

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Chapter overview	148
The impact of the doctorate on my own professional development	148
Summary of findings	148
Recommendations	156
Areas for further research	156
Recommendations to ASTs	157
Recommendations to head teachers	158
Recommendations to policymakers	158
Implications of findings	159

Figures and Tables

		Page No.
Figure 1.1	Overview of findings of factors impacting on AST outreach	11
Figure 1.2	Map of teachers' perception of their inter-school Contexts	15
Table 3.1	Case study features	59
Table 3.2	Details of ASTs interviewed	64
Table 3.3	Summary of observations	65
Table 3.4	Examples of development of data categories	75
Table 5.1	Consultation on the Professional Duties of Advanced Skills Teachers	134
Table 5.2	Spring 2004 Survey	135

Chapter 1

Introduction

Who are Advanced Skills Teachers?

Imagine if you loved your job as a teacher so much that you were bubbling over with classroom ideas to try out. Imagine if you were paid extra and given extra time to encourage other teachers. Imagine if other teachers respected you so much that they consulted you for ideas, and that they both came to watch you at work and invited you to neighbouring schools. This is close to the ideal of the Advanced Skills Teacher role, AST.

This study seeks to provide a critical rather than an ideal view of the AST role in practice in a small-scale study. It seeks to be critical because it was based on the assumption that new educational policies designed at national level would be subject to interpretation in practice at local level (Gorard 2006; Fullan 2001; Hargreaves 1994). The research explores the issues and challenges according to practitioners and stakeholders in two areas of England, and the findings are related to educational theory. I was interested in the challenges as well as the benefits of the role, although as an external researcher I was aware of issues attached to presenting bad news (Burgess 1985).

Advanced Skills Teachers in England are accredited as excellent practitioners and are paid more to support teaching and learning, based on a split of 80% in their home school and 20% in outreach schools. The outreach role is the particular focus of this study. A key idea behind the Advanced Skills Teachers (AST) scheme was that exemplary classroom teaching should be rewarded via an alternative promotion route to the conventional promotion to senior management. This is reflected in a 2003 government recruitment advertisement:

“Not all teachers want to be a head, some teachers just want to get ahead...If you want to stay in the classroom and help shape the future of teaching, why not think of becoming an AST.” (Appendix A, TES 2003 advertisement)

This offer of an alternative route to promotion is of interest because it implies a parity of esteem for teachers and managers. The AST scheme could be seen as a retention and recognition strategy and this theme is explored in the data. My findings suggest that the comparison with a head teacher as in the 2003 advertisement (Appendix A) was not the most appropriate analogy and that ASTs were more appropriately seen as middle leaders or teacher leaders during the period of this study.

An important rationale was a national drive to improve standards through disseminating excellent teaching, to improve retention of good teachers, and to improve subject specialism. This can be traced in policy documents:

“schools need to establish themselves as professional learning communities for subject specialists.” (DfES 2003a)

There was also a link to wider proposals on performance-related pay:

“the challenge for us...is to recruit good people into teaching, to enable those who are demonstrably successful to rise rapidly and improve the status of teachers in their own eyes and those of the public.” (Barber 2003).

The performance-related pay scheme was subject to criticism, but was nevertheless implemented. The history of the introduction of competencies and performance-related pay in teaching was seen as connected with a loss of professionalism and autonomy through central control (Whitty 2002). Also contributing to the initial fear was a link between the AST scheme and a Fast Track Scheme (Sutton et al. 2000; Barber 2003), and this led to fears of *“some young whiz kid in your twenties”* (Blake et al. 2000, p. 7).

The AST title and grade was launched in 1998 under a pilot scheme of 50 ASTs in Specialist Schools. I found that the association with Specialist Schools has continued, even though the scheme is now open to all schools.

“It was deliberately piloted in a supportive and receptive environment in specialist schools which had been required to make the improvement of teaching and learning a focus

of their development plans to qualify for specialist school status.” (Sutton et al. 2000, p. 425)

By the start of the research period of this study (2003), according to a DfES source the total number of ASTs was 3,500. Yet according to Howson (2000) in the Times Educational Supplement, this might represent a level of under-recruitment compared with a planned target of 5% of the workforce.

“Much hype surrounded the creation of advanced skills teachers...but so far they account for just 0.1% of the workforce” (Howson 2000)

No mention of target figures appears in the most recent communications. (Source: personal email to DfES team, May 2006.)

When the scheme was first launched, there was an initial reaction of scepticism and fear that creating a so-called elite cadre of teachers would not be acceptable to teachers or to unions (Blake et al. 2000; Sutton et al. 2000). The press nicknamed the role *superteacher* (Goodwyn and Fidler 2003). The legacy of this appeared in my data, and I found that ASTs had devised ways to overcome this label. For example, a key finding, discussed in chapter 5, is that ASTs often sought to downgrade their status in order to appear on the same level as their colleagues. Yet at the same time, the formal AST acknowledgement of excellence in teaching was a source of personal pride and status for the school. Where they were part of networks run by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, I found that some ASTs saw themselves as external subject ambassadors for their school. In chapter 6, this is compared with the role of the local education authority.

The response to the AST scheme changed over time despite initial teething problems (Goodwyn and Fidler 2003). This was certainly the view of the teaching press: *“Five years on, even the critics have been forced to admit that this is one government initiative that seems to work”* (McGavin 2004). Although I was not attempting to evaluate the scheme, I was interested in perceptions of why it might or might not be successful in a given context, and what the challenges of outreach would be.

Researching a live policy: national standards for ASTs

In order to become accredited as an AST and demonstrate excellence in teaching, a system of external assessment of a portfolio of evidence was in place. The concept that excellence in teaching can be observed and assessed, then shared, reflects a central policy context. As discussed in the literature chapter and the conclusion, this can also be related to international debates on teacher professionalism and autonomy. During the 2003-2006 data collection period, ASTs had to address the following main headings contained in the standards (see Appendix A):

- 1 Excellent results
- 2 Excellent subject or specialist knowledge
- 3 Excellent ability to plan
- 4 Excellent ability to teach, manage pupils and maintain discipline
- 5 Excellent ability to assess and evaluate
- 6 Excellent ability to advise and support other teachers (DfES 2001)

In this study, I am especially interested in the sixth standard – “*advise and support other teachers.*” The first five standards clearly relate directly to pupil and classroom work, whereas support for other teachers is of interest as representing a formalization of a new aspect of the teaching role which might previously have been taken place on an informal or *ad hoc* basis. I argue that such a support and advice role can be viewed as a form of professional development, even though this term is not used in the DfES guidelines (see Appendix A).

The outreach support role is explored in detail in the findings chapters, and the conclusion highlights the range of factors impacting on the scope of outreach. This conceptualization of outreach as a form of professional development is also related to the key literature concerning the past limitations of professional development (Fullan 1991), comparison with advisory teachers, (Harland 1990), the factors involved in the transfer of good practice between schools (Fielding et al. 2005), and the possibilities of professional learning communities (Wenger 1998).

The AST standards were subject to review and consultation during the research period. I was able to compare subtle changes in wording and emphasis between drafts up until the publication in June 2007 of the standards to be used from September 2007 (Appendix A). For example *outreach* is replaced by *other work places* and *beyond their own school*. It seems as if I have studied a phenomenon which may be about to change. I have learnt that this moving landscape is an issue with studying “live” topics, as is discussed in the literature section.

The amended September 2007 AST standards are significant for my findings. Before the new standards were published, were consultation periods in November 2005 and April 2006. I used the opportunity to give my views in an on-line survey.¹ I commented that the change of emphasis to include *leadership* and *evaluating others’ work* might create an unpopular tension, according to my findings. I was pleased to see a reference to *different context* in the draft standards although this does not appear in the final publication of the 2007 standards. I also noted a reference to ASTs as *reflective practitioners* and to the importance of *risk taking* at the consultation phase, although these were replaced by *demonstrate excellent and innovative pedagogical practice* which might include an understanding of the earlier concepts. The relevance of Schön’s (1987) theories of artistry and reflection are discussed in the literature chapter.

Rationale for the study of outreach

My interest in outreach arises from a gap in the literature on ASTs, from my professional interests in research on inter-school collaboration, and from my practitioner experience of the contrasts between schools.

In the literature I was able to find some overviews of problems arising with the scheme (Sutton et al. 2000; Blake 2000; Ofsted 2001), but I could not find the level of ethnographic detail I wanted about how outreach worked in practice. If AST outreach was indeed difficult to establish and some ASTs

¹ Source: Training and Development Agency for Schools Website, accessed November 2005 and April 2006

were isolated (Goodwyn and Fidler 2003, p. 6), why was this the case? There was very little empirical research on ASTs and no exploration of outreach when I started this study. If I had chosen to investigate more established roles such as women head teachers, more obvious starting points would have existed in the literature. During the research period, two new relevant studies emerged: Fielding et al. (2005) on the ideas of good practice transfer; and Taylor and Jennings (2004), which provided additional data on ASTs as a point of comparison with my emerging findings. These studies are discussed in full in the literature chapter.

I was less interested in the history or management of ASTs, and more interested in what it was like to do the job. I also saw the role of ASTs as belonging to other debates about whose knowledge counts in developing teachers and developing research (Shulman 2004; Bruce et al. 1997). ASTs reflect the historical shift towards school-based teacher professional development – in other words, professional development by practitioners for practitioners. In current reviews, ownership of school-based CPD is seen as an effective strategy (Bolam and Weindling 2006).

Furlong et al. (2001) outline the history of changes to teacher education in the 1980s as away from a position of university control of the content of teacher education to more emphasis on practical training. The radical reform was seen as starting in the 1980s and continuing in the 1990s, and is also associated with a decline in the role of the local authority. The reaction from those under threat was to warn of vocationalism, instrumentalism and lack of critical reflection. Moore (2004) refers to higher regulation of teachers' work and low autonomy (p. 60).

Beyond education, other public sector reforms, including nursing, also looked at modernisation through devolving responsibility. A follow-up study might compare across sectors. According to Office of Public Services Reform website (2000):

“Innovation and efficiency are much more likely to be achieved where people are given the incentive to do so at local level....managers have got the authority to experiment

and take on the risks that go with such innovation.”

Office of Public Services Reform website (2000)

During this period, a number of government initiatives promoted the idea of inter-school collaboration, leading to the common good of area-wide improvement. These included Education Improvement Partnerships, Federations, and Excellence in Cities, Leading Edge schools, Leadership Incentive Grants, Extended schools and Networked Learning Communities (Glatter 2003). Some of these had a particular focus on tackling urban disadvantage and teacher recruitment, including the London Challenge. In this study the two local authority case study areas are shire counties, rather than urban areas, as outlined in the methodology chapter. Several evaluations of these policies emerged during the research period alongside other literature on collaboration and partnership (Fielding et al 2005; Rudd et al. 2004; Arnold 2006).

The idea of outreach and support for other teachers was of interest from a policy perspective because it is based on the assumption that such knowledge can be transferred between teachers. Would good teachers be good mentors or supportive trainers? This wider policy context provided helpful background to the study, but what was lacking was qualitative work on the perspective of ASTs. What exactly did outreach in other schools consist of? I saw this study as potentially contributing to knowledge about a new teacher role or about collaborative professional development, and linking the outcome to my professional interests.

There was also a strong professional interest in this topic. In my travels, I have visited several hundred schools in a professional capacity as a researcher and trainer. The stark differences between schools always gave me food for thought on the way home. Some of differences seemed to lie in the degree of innovation and attitudes to professional development. This led me to think about what it would feel like to be a colleague in one of these work environments. According to Rosenholtz (1989), some schools are stuck and some are learning-enriched. I have also been struck by the visible inequalities in resources and status between schools, and have found myself wondering what it is about the local context that makes the differences so

stark.

I present a combination of professional interests and literature that have been influential in my framing of the emerging research questions and conceptual frameworks. For example, I was engaged in a separate sponsored study during this period in which I was evaluating the impact of collaborative school clusters. I needed to develop my own identity and niche as a researcher. The boundaries and differences between my own independent AST research and my paid work as a researcher is outlined in the methodology chapter, where I emphasise my scrupulousness in keeping the data collection sites entirely separate.

My initial curiosity concerned how ASTs would experience the job of outreach, and how they would negotiate the inevitable school differences. My practitioner hunch was that it would not be as easy as it sounded.

Rationale for the research questions

1. Why were ASTs introduced?

The question of why ASTs were introduced is related to the notion of outreach as professional development. I explore ways in which it might be distinctive, both at national policy level and at local level. Clearly, to evaluate of an entire policy in an educational change framework would be too ambitious for such a small-scale study. Instead, in a small-scale study I explore how AST outreach is operating on the ground from the point of view of local authorities, schools, and especially ASTs.

These issues and perspectives led to the first key question and related sub-questions:

Question	Chapter reference
<i>1. Why were ASTs introduced?</i>	Chapter 1 - national reform context and shift to school-based training Chapter 2 - grey literature on ASTs Chapters 4 and 6 - local authority and inter-school contexts
What are the key features of the national policy context and the local contexts?	As above
How likely is the AST model to survive in its present form?	Chapter 7 - conclusion Chapter 5 - 2007 changed standards

2. What is outreach?

After exploring the background to ASTs, the central question was to understand the outreach process as it was experienced by practitioners. Such a perspective was under-explored in the literature at the time, and was therefore a key rationale for the research. Understanding the nature of outreach was important both as in terms of how it reflected current policy and as an aspect of the theorisation of the issues and challenges arising from it. The findings show a wide range of activity and form the basis for theorising some challenges of the role in terms of local contexts, reflective practice, and emerging work on collaboration between schools.

Question	Chapter reference
<i>2. What is outreach?</i>	Chapters 4, 5, 6 – activities and challenges in outreach
What are practitioner perceptions of the benefits of the role?	As above - especially chapter 4
In what way is outreach distinctive?	Chapters 4, 5, 6 Chapter 7

3. *How do ASTs work with other professionals in other contexts?*

The theme I present in this study is of ASTs moving out of the familiar home school and finding ways to cross inter-school contexts like travellers crossing borders. The findings show that local contexts, especially the role of the local authority and differences between schools and relationships, might influence ASTs’ experience of outreach. I acknowledge that national policy contexts, especially changes in professional standards, will have some bearing on their role. The findings show the ASTs using informal networking and collegiality, not behaving like superteachers. The role of the local authority is also considered in the deployment of ASTs.

Question	Chapter reference
3. <i>How do ASTs work with other professionals in other contexts across school boundaries?</i>	Chapters 4 and 5
How are school and classroom differences interpreted by ASTs?	As above
What is the role of the local authority in managing AST outreach?	Chapters 4 and 6

4. *How does AST outreach relate to other collaborative work?*

I use the term ‘other collaborative work’ to explore other models of AST practice beyond one-to-one peer support. For example, chapter 6 shows how ASTs might work in outreach teams, depending on local authority preference or local inter-school clusters. They might also work closely with other ASTs and develop teacher networks with the potential to undertake local projects. I found that AST inter-school collaborative work was not necessarily a reflection of headteacher-led formal partnerships or formal networks, but might be tied to informal local collaborations between ASTs.

At national level, for example, outreach could be considered alongside collaboration policies for school improvement or an interest in networking

for teacher development. How this does or does not happen at local level is seen in the findings. The study considers how AST group work might be developed in future through such collaborative work.

Question	Chapter reference
4. <i>How does AST outreach relate to other collaborative work?</i>	Chapter 6
Sub-question: How might ASTs contribute to professional learning groups?	Chapters 6 and 7

Figure 1.1 represents an overview of my findings of the factors impacting on AST outreach in this small-scale study. On the left are shown the contextual factors, and on the right are the issues for ASTs. These are fully explored in the following chapters.

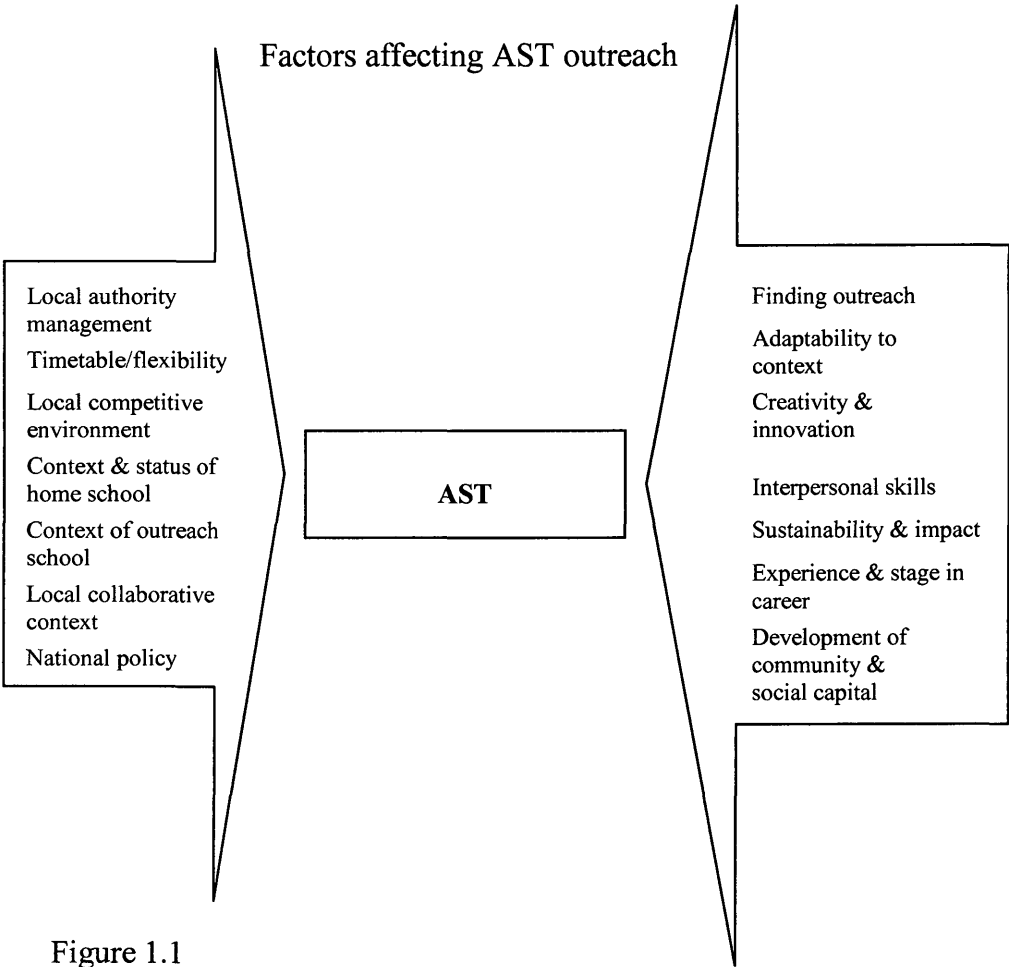


Figure 1.1

Rationale for grounded methodology

The title of this research has changed, and this mirrors my changing understanding and emerging theories of AST outreach. This is as might be expected in accordance with grounded theory where, rather than testing a hypothesis, working theories emerge (Glaser and Strauss 1968). In particular, at the end of the stage one research, I decided that the provisional title *Partnership in Practice* was not a suitable match for my initial findings. This title had been influenced by my involvement in externally-sponsored research on partnership and collaboration (Woods et al. 2006), where in my sponsored team research, I found groups of ASTs were operating in highly collaborative groups. This was part of a wider collaborative infrastructure and area-wide vision. In contrast, in my own sample this kind of infrastructure seemed to be less developed. ASTs were in many cases not operating in formal partnerships on a school-to-school basis, but much more as solo agents, both in the use of informal networks and in the development of new communities. Elsewhere, my finding was that ASTs were being prevented from doing outreach.

The wider picture of ASTs depicted in emerging literature served to confirm my findings about the difficulties of outreach (Taylor and Jennings 2004). It seemed more appropriate to look at the concept of outreach as a series of challenges rather than as a straightforward partnership. I also added a reference to my experience in travelling to different types of school via the phrase "*Crossing the borders*". Here I was referring to borders for ASTs in terms of gaining access to classrooms and schools for outreach, understanding unfamiliar school cultures, and the new professional aspects of the teaching role.

Another way of looking back on how the research developed is to compare the methodology used in the stage-one first-year scoping study with that of stage two. The stage one research enabled me to locate some informants and to map some issues concerning the AST role and outreach. I found AST informants through attending conferences; I found AST stakeholders at local authority level, and arranged a DfES interview. During stage one I narrowed

the sample ASTs to two local authorities and to Science and English ASTs, as is explained in the methodology chapter. I pilot-tested an interview schedule. I used AST conferences as a way to both observe groups of ASTs and distribute a survey. From the survey I was able to select suitable ASTs for follow-up semi-structured telephone interviews, as the methodology chapter on sample selection explains.

The stage two research allowed me to narrow my focus to ASTs with considerable outreach experience, and to explore further the importance of context. I undertook some face-to-face observation of an outreach session plus some school-based interviews, to complement the telephone interviews which continued during this period. I also sought some head teacher perspectives. I returned to the local authorities for a second interview and attended another AST conference in the same place, this time changing the format of the survey. I also sought to expand my theories by looking at unlike groups, namely ASTs in a school in special measures where outreach had been suspended. The series of observation experiences added enough rich detail for me to develop case-study-style vignettes which feature in each of the findings chapters as illustrations of different models of AST outreach in different contexts.

I have focused on AST work in two local authorities, each with large numbers of ASTs. The reasons for this choice and the limitations of this sample are discussed in the methodology section. This is a qualitative multi-site ethnographic case study with illustrations of outreach practice from two local authorities.

One of the dilemmas in the research has been where to limit the study in terms of policy context. The 2003-2006 study period turned out to be an interesting time to study ASTs, with its new standards and funding arrangements. In the conclusion, I consider how the future the role of AST outreach may move into a different phase.

Development of theoretical frameworks

The theme running through this study is of outreach as a challenge to different stakeholders. As part of exploring the challenges I drew on three main conceptual frameworks to guide the study, with my approach evolving from a combination of literature review, my own professional background, and the iterative process of the grounded methodology. They are summarised here and are explored more fully in the literature review and the discussion of findings.

Reflective practitioner

This important concept is based on Schön (1987), with acknowledgment of its older roots. As a starting point, I expected this framework to be relevant to the ASTs because their support work with other teachers might be seen as a mentoring, coaching or artistry role. This links with the AST challenge of how to develop excellence and perhaps reflective practice in others, and how to externalise skills which might be intuitive or spontaneous to the AST. This was explored via AST perceptions and observations and reports of their work.

In the literature chapter, I show the relevance of Schön (1987) and also of Shulman (2004), who refer to the importance of incongruities in experiences as being helpful in revising personal theories. This turned out to be very relevant to the findings throughout the data that ASTs were more likely to refer to themselves as being prepared to make mistakes rather than as being invincible “superteachers”. Although defining excellence is not the focus of this study, and lists of excellence have been criticised as reductionist, I acknowledge a vast literature on what counts as excellence or effective teaching (Bruce et al. 1997). Views of good teaching are likely to be controversial and topical, for example in the polarities of traditional versus so-called progressive pedagogies, and teaching as an art or craft. As I gathered data on the range of outreach work, I reanalysed the reflective practitioner framework as being relevant to the ASTs’ own process of professional development – in other words, the fact that being an AST

involved developing one’s own reflective practice as well as the possibility of developing it in others via one’s support role.

Context

Context has several reference points deriving from different traditions within the educational literature, as discussed in chapter 2. This study does not refer to classroom context, although this might be relevant if I were comparing ASTs’ and other teachers’ application of pedagogy. My focus is not on the ASTs’ pedagogic excellence in a classroom setting, but what it means to be an AST who is engaged in outreach in certain contexts. Context is not restricted to the home school, although the latter is connected with the ASTs’ sense of worth and autonomy to conduct outreach. Context in this study has both national and local meaning, as Figure 1.2 shows. National context is connected with the policy agenda, while local context refers to the role of the local authority and the specific factors influencing outreach in the zone that I term the inter-school context. My assumption is that the AST experience of outreach may be shaped both by national guidelines and by local contexts.

Hargreaves’ (1985) views on macro and micro contexts relate to this conceptualisation. The overlap of contexts is represented below. I designed this study in such a way as to be able to map how teachers perceive their inter-school contexts through their outreach work. Figure 1.2

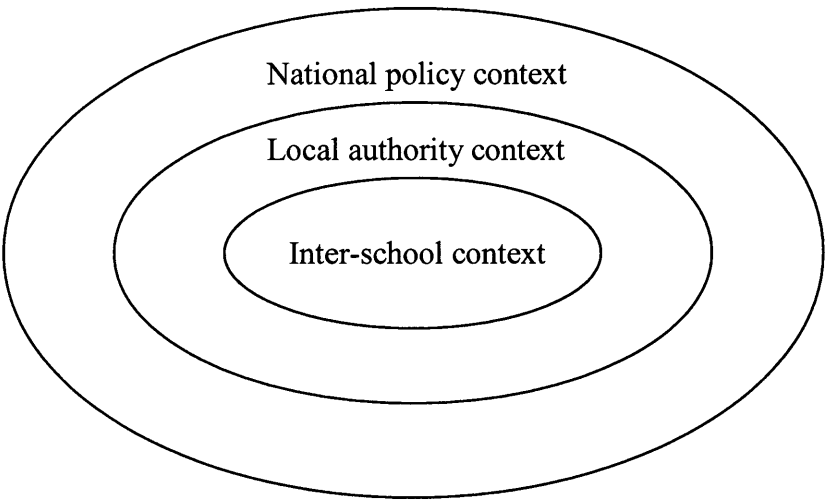


Figure 1.2

Collaboration

This concept refers to my understanding of outreach as collaboration that involves teachers from different institutions. I focus on the AST as the unit of analysis rather than the inter-school partnerships conducted by headteachers. In chapter 2, I acknowledge the importance of other meanings of collaboration in the educational literature, including a social constructivist view of collaborative learning as a type of pedagogy that is deliberately intended to change power relations (Gergen 2005).

Collaboration is important because it provides an alternative perspective to the references in school improvement literature of internal or intra-school collaboration between groups of staff. Within a given school, joint-work and shared discourse about teaching is often seen as an indicator of school improvement – see for example the classic study by Rosenholtz (1989), and more recently by Hopkins (2001), who was influential in policymaking at the DfES at the time of this research. Much of the literature views collaboration positively, but others have referred to it as representing a threat to autonomy or as being contrived (Hargreaves 1991; 1994).

Less has been written about collaboration between schools, including how good ideas transfer across contexts. I refer to the emerging literature on collaboration between schools. In such studies the focus may be studying collaboration between groups of schools and headteachers and area-wide collaboration for school improvement (Evans et al. 2005). I was particularly interested in getting beyond positive studies as part of the critique. I acknowledge the importance of Fielding et al. (2005) on the complexities behind the policy assumption:

“Accordingly spreading good practice remains a very difficult thing to do. It seems that policy makers lack the formal knowledge about how to spread good practice while too few practitioners actually know how to do practice transfer effectively.” (Fielding et al. 2005, p. 1)

My understanding of collaboration shifted from a straightforward view of ASTs’ outreach as an example of operationalising a school-sponsored

partnership to a much more complex picture. My findings included examples of outreach which indicated a negative or absent collaboration at school level, but a positive collaboration between informal teacher networks.

Collaboration in the literature also refers to the value of collaborative CPD, and the need for a sense of ownership and building up from teachers' concerns (Cordingley et al. 2005; Bolam and Weindling 2006, p. 94). This literature is relevant to the theme of change and reform, for example concerning the repetition of mistakes of professional development (Tyack & Cuban 1995). Fullan's (1991) extensive review of professional development outlined ineffective models, including one-shot workshops; under-funding; lack of connection to other policies; failure to take into account site differences between schools; and disconnection between instructional (pedagogic) and organisational change. What was needed was more than training:

"educational reform will never amount to anything until teachers become seamlessly inquiry oriented, skilled, reflective and collaborative professionals." (Fullan 1991, p. 326)

Similarly, Handscomb (2004) concludes:

"However, although consortia working, collaboration and development of an enquiring research culture are becoming established features of the professional development and school improvement agendas, ensuring effective sharing of validated practice remains problematic. If schools are really to put collaboration to work then they need to give much more robust thought and analysis to processes involved in creating genuine communities of practice." (Handscomb 2004, p. 98)

I aimed to find out more about what sort of reflection or enquiry might be seen in outreach, and exactly what it meant to be a collaborative professional.

Within the sociological tradition of education lies the idea of the stratification of schools which are shaped by wider structural and cultural

forces. This is summarised by Moore (2004, p. 113), introducing the idea of marketization and choice of schools, and an increasingly differentiated school system where the importance of locality and cultural capital is emphasised. For me, outreach is of interest precisely because of this local context and because of the inequalities between schools, curriculum departments, teachers and pupils all of which are all reflected in the ASTs' accounts of outreach.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Chapter Overview

This chapter is organised around the three key conceptual frameworks of the study. It traces the origins of the ideas from a broad range of educational literatures, and also acknowledges the overlap and connections with associated literatures.

The first research question concerning *why ASTs were introduced* is related to the key conceptual framework of context, which is defined with reference to several areas of educational literature. The specific literature about ASTs is limited, but is useful in setting the wider policy context. The lack of reference to local contexts and how ASTs work across different school contexts is part of the rationale for this study.

Reflective practice is associated with the literature on developing and improving teacher practice, especially individual practice. Associated themes in literature on critical enquiry, mentoring and advisory teacher work are also signposted and considered. Reflective practice is especially relevant to research questions 2 and 3: “*what is outreach?*” and “*how do ASTs work with other professionals?*”

The key concept of collaboration is associated with school improvement literature, and the emerging literature on the transfer of good practice. Associated concepts from the literature on collaborative professionals, teacher leadership and communities (including communities of practice and networked learning) are also considered. This is relevant to the fourth question on *how outreach relates to other collaborative work*.

In the course of the initial literature search I perceived no attempts to theorise AST outreach work either in terms of the evolution of the teacher's role (Hargreaves A. 1994), or in relation to past lessons learnt from CPD (Bolam & Weindling, 2006), or distributed leadership. What was missing from early reports on AST was any sense of the local inter-school context or the practitioner perspective. If, as reported, outreach was difficult, then why and what could be learnt from this?

Therefore the gaps in the literature were especially important to framing both the second research question (*"what is outreach?"*) and the third question (*"how do ASTs work with other professionals?"*). These limitations encouraged me to think beyond the topicality of ASTs and look for more timeless issues in educational research. This chapter is organised in terms of an examination of the key literature concepts of context, reflection and collaboration, although it is acknowledged that such divisions are artificial and often overlap.

Key concept: context

A key driver for the research, which started in 2003, was the limited literature on ASTs, and in particular the literature on outreach. The question of *"why ASTs?"* is partly considered in relation to the national context, and is followed up with findings on local contexts. There were limited references to context in the AST-specific literature, but I saw that context-free professional development (Shulman 2004) could be problematic.

Context has multiple interpretations in educational literature, including policy, school, department or classroom-level context impacting on professional development. I am treating as separate any interpretation of the context as a focus on learner context. Learner context is also important to Day (1999) in terms of those factors that are related to a teacher's life history, including personal and professional biography and emotional and

psychological factors. I did not collect data on this, but I do acknowledge these alternative perspectives. For example, from the tradition of Piagetian and Vygotskian developmental psychology I might have considered views of child learning, or theories of developing other teachers via adult learning, as appropriate for different research questions.

In this study, context is used to explore the research questions in three ways:

- National context – refers to the policy level, such as the change in standards for ASTs, and the relationship with other educational policies. This is considered in this chapter.
- Local context – includes some reference to local authority management, and focuses especially on the particular local inter-school context. According to Fielding et al. (2005) a number of factors impact on the transfer of good practice that is expected from outreach.
- Individual AST work context – how ASTs experience the local context, including why ASTs were introduced at their home school, degree of autonomy in outreach, variety and context of work with other teachers, and how differences in context make them re-interpret their own practice.

The process of arriving at these three conceptual levels of context did not derive from one writer or obvious tradition, but rather from several overlapping areas of literature, as explored later in this chapter. This is especially so in relation to reflective practice and professional development.

Accordingly, the literature on ASTs, although a narrow field, became a means to research the national context for ASTs. It provided an overview of the general problems arising with ASTs, especially in relation to outreach, although it did not offer sufficient explanation, critical perspective or local context. The scarcity of literature and lack of critical perspective could be seen as a typical factor affecting research on a new and “live” policy. As the national policy mandates for AST professional standards changed between 2003 and 2006, and as relevant new literature emerged, I reconsidered my findings from ASTs in specific local contexts.

For example, at the start of the research in 2003, the grey literature, press archives and initial papers referring to ASTs were characterised by their small AST-related data set. I also noted the negative press label attached to ASTs as elitist “superteachers” who were predicted to upset the status quo. Survey data from Goodwyn and Fidler (2003) reported ambivalence towards ASTs on the part of local authorities, with many choosing not to take up the scheme. Blake et al. (2000) voiced the fears of head teachers from survey data that ASTs would not work because their introduction would undermine relationships or school cultures of collegiality. This was in contrast to my data, which showed that maintaining collegiality became important to ASTs, as described especially in chapter 5.

The attitude towards ASTs became more positive once the scheme was underway. This is reflected in the difference between the Ofsted (2001) and Ofsted (2003) reports, and also in more positive media reception. According to the teachers’ press:

“ASTs have become a part of the educational landscape.”
(McGavin 2004)

and:

“Many heads say ASTs have made a real difference... ASTs themselves talk of a dream job.” (Hastings 2005)

For example, the Times Educational Supplement feature, *Tips from the Top* (McGavin 2004), included detailed good-news cameos of successful ASTs and pointed to a U-turn of view by the teachers’ unions, to the effect that *“there are some ASTs doing a cracking job”* and *“people should get the highest rewards for remaining in the classroom”*. (McGavin 2004). This is an interesting response, since these were the same unions who were so opposed to the introduction of performance-related pay.

However, one commentator remained critical, and pointed out that there had been an under-recruitment of ASTs, who represented a minority of the workforce (Howson 2001). This seemed to be the case according to other data, but it did not alter my view that ASTs were worthy of further study.

Sutton et al. (2000) provided a useful history of the development of the AST in the UK, including references to a similar scheme in Australia. The

authors raised some salient points about the wider rollout of the scheme: the scheme was piloted in favourable conditions among supportive schools, but this might not work on a larger scale, or it might lead to “*innovation enclaves*” (p. 425). When I looked at specific local contexts I was not able to test this potential problem of innovation enclaves, but I did find that ASTs in schools in special measures had a different experience, and the issue of isolation in outreach work also arose.

The importance of understanding local context could be seen in relation to accounts of poor LEA management of ASTs, and especially of outreach. Specifically, early reports suggested that not enough support was given in establishing and monitoring outreach work. I traced this criticism from an early study (Ofsted report 2001) through to a later study by Taylor and Jennings (2004). During the 2003-2006 research period, I had to keep up to date with new emerging studies. Taylor and Jennings’ (2004) report was based on a large-scale survey and interviews of ASTs and local authority coordinators. I was involved in a study of AST management by local authorities (Bennett et al. 2006). Among their negative findings were that training for the role was still seen as inadequate, and outreach rarely contributed to ASTs’ performance management (compares to Ofsted 2003). On the positive side, the majority of the ASTs saw both their role (p. 5) and network meetings as valuable. It went on to make some recommendations aimed at a local authority and schools audience. This report provided a helpful point of comparison with my data, although it was not focused on outreach, nor was its intent to theorise outreach.

Two years later, by the time of the next Ofsted report, there was reported improvement in the situation:

“many of the weaknesses of the AST organization of outreach function have been addressed.” (Ofsted 2003, p. 15)

Ofsted now saw the ASTs as making a positive contribution to teaching and learning, mirroring the warmer press reports. Ofsted (2003) reported that local authorities could still improve outreach by considering cost-effectiveness, criteria for success, and, crucially, further AST training (Ofsted 2003, p. 13).

“ASTs were sometimes unsure what to do and did not make the best use of their time” (Ofsted 2003, p. 12).

This is important, as it implies the need for training. I was not aiming to research cost-effectiveness, but I did find that time was an important theme in the data, and helped explain some of the conflicts in negotiating outreach; I relate this to the theme of autonomy.

In addition to criticism of outreach management by the local authority, two other criticisms were isolation and recruitment difficulties. Many of the early AST pilot schools were isolated from local schools (Ofsted 2001, p. 6). Outreach was not only difficult to establish, but

“depended crucially on the outside links that schools had established”. (Ofsted 2001, p. 2)

This reflects Sutton et al.’s point about innovation enclaves. It is only partly confirmed by my data because I also found that ASTs were using individual links and informal networks to establish outreach – in other words, they were able to go beyond the limits of a school’s lack of outside links.

Ofsted (2001, p. 20) reported the additional difficulty of recruiting ASTs to schools in special measures. In answer to the question, “why were ASTs introduced?” this presents an alternative local reason linked both to labour market pay incentives and, I suggest, to the social capital of schools. In chapter 5 the vignette illustrates how ASTs are working in emergency mode, with no outreach for home ASTs, during special measures. During the data collection at this school, I heard about the same AST recruitment problem. I also found some dissonance between the local authority strategy of sending ASTs to such schools (which might represent the best use of resources) and the ambiguity ASTs felt about how this might affect their image if they were only associated with rescuing schools in special measures. This dissonance was of interest; one explanation might be that the AST was closely identified with the status of the home school. This suggests an alternative reason for the introduction of ASTs, namely to reinforce or boost the status of a school.

This collection of papers and reports provided a general overview of the AST role as it was developing. The reported criticisms of outreach are seen

essentially as management problems for LEAs, with some blocking from schools in terms of allocation, isolation, guidance, recruitment and the use of time. I decided that even a negative view of outreach was worthy of exploration, especially as it did not sufficiently explain why or in what context these difficulties arose. This lay behind the use of the word ‘challenge’ in the title, and the decision to bind the study by the two local authorities. The press reports gave a more positive view of ASTs, although that might be expected, as I was interviewing stakeholders. Such a shift towards acceptance might be a typical phase of change, requiring five or more years to become either institutionalized or else rejected (Fullan 2001).

The other relevant understanding of context during the research period came in November 2005, with the drafting of the emergent new standards for ASTs and other teachers that were based on consultation in November 2005, appeared in draft form in April 2006, and were to be established from September 2007. These are discussed in the light of my data and emerging theories. I needed to retain policy as a background theme while still keeping in mind that my own focus was on the implementation of ASTs at local level. The new standards had implications for changing the AST role and outreach in future.

In summary, the AST-specific literature was limited in scope, but useful. It was especially helpful in highlighting shifts towards an acceptance of ASTs and in listing the general problems associated with outreach. I return to these issues in the findings chapters, and attempt to go further than the Ofsted reports in exploring local-level factors. An alternative approach to considering why ASTs were introduced would be to compare other public-sector reforms and the introduction of performance-related pay as a recruitment incentive and alternative means of spreading innovation (Barber 2003). Details of AST pay scales are not included in this study, although they might have some bearing on individual motivations for becoming an AST.

Key concept: Reflective practice

Reflective practice is associated with the literature on developing and improving teacher practice, especially individual practice. ASTs are expected to love teaching, to be very good at it, and to transfer their enthusiasm via the development of others. I was interested in what the literature said about excellent teaching and professional development, including reflective practice. I was not intending to capture this concept of excellence in order to test it, to generalize, or to produce a book of tips (Cowley 2002). Instead, I was looking for a more theoretical understanding of how AST work operates. Reflective practice is linked with the second and third research questions. It is relevant to outreach through the notions of explaining implicit knowledge, dealing with uncertainty, and becoming critical and questioning.

I explored the conceptual source of “reflective practice”, which is not to be confused with the everyday meaning of thinking about something. Instead, I learned to associate it with the development of experiential knowledge, with critique of practice, and with critical enquiry. I started by reviewing key ideas from Schön (1987) along with parallel ideas in Shulman (2004). Critical enquiry also features in the literature on teacher development, mentoring, and, to a lesser extent, in a small-scale study of advisory teachers (Harland 1990). Thus reflective practice might be a relevant framework to explain how ASTs develop others in outreach, and also how they develop their own practice. From the literature, the possibility arose that challenge and the critical enquiry in relation to the practice of others might be an ideal, but in reality might be absent and too difficult to achieve in collegial settings. I had limited data on this issue, and probed ASTs on how they dealt with weak teachers. I also thought about other types of data contained in follow-up studies, particularly longitudinal observations, to see how, when and if outreach work might lead to critical dialogue.

Reflective-practice frameworks are operational in other fields, including nursing and social work. I argue that reflective practice has become part of contemporary discourse in schools: for example, it appears in England’s

new professional standards as an essential quality for senior-level teachers and ASTs. Reflective practice in relation to teaching can be traced in several major literatures and is also reflected in ideas of the extended professional and practitioner researcher (Stenhouse 1985). In the conclusion and recommendations I speculate from the Hillshire data and comment on the potential of AST group work to support the researching of own practice.

Reflective practice, according to Schön, is essentially an experiential model of practical knowledge gained through learning in context. In framing the second and third research questions of “*what is outreach?*” and “*how do ASTs work with teachers in other contexts?*” I expected that reflective practice might relate to outreach activities such as co-teaching, observation and dialogue. After analysing the data on the wide range of outreach activities in several contexts, I reconsidered whether this model alone was enough to explain the choices of activities.

In the literature, I found that reflective practice was linked to other relevant concepts, such as tacit knowledge, wisdom, critical enquiry, a sense of imperfection, and a need for ongoing improvement. Thus one relevant dilemma for ASTs might be how they, as experts, make implicit and tacit knowledge explicit to non-experts. This builds on the idea of critical awareness, a sense of imperfection arising from mistakes, or a sense of incongruity with internal theories. This was relevant to my data concerning the desire of ASTs to demystify their role and admit to making mistakes.

Implicit knowledge is defined as such because, according to Schön, some ways of knowing arise from doing, and tend to be spontaneous and difficult to articulate. He cites the example of physical skills such as dancing, riding a bicycle and throwing a ball. Schön points out that any attempts to make such spontaneous knowing verbal have to be acknowledged as constructions and therefore will always be distorted. This is *reflection on action*, and Schön’s view of senior practitioners is that it is appropriate to take on a coaching role, since this focuses on learning through *seeing, not telling*.

ASTs are deemed to be expert teachers. Yet the idea of just soaking up expertise through close observation of experts is problematic. Schön

identifies the issue of knowing what to look for in practice in order to learn from it. His examples are those of architects' apprentices and musicians. He says the job of the senior coach is not just to tell, but above all "*to help them to see in their own way what they most need to see*". I saw this as relevant to my research, because it was not known from prior research how ASTs helped less confident practitioners "see" different constructions of their classroom work, or how they might help them improve. This links with the data of this study that suggest that ASTs were not necessarily in a hierarchical relationship, and tended both to play down their status and play up collegiality.

It may be that some aspects of teaching are easier to convey than others. According to Brown (1989), the more skilful a teacher is, the more difficult it may be to explain the teaching because of the spontaneity involved. This has implications for the AST as an expert teacher who may well have the ability to make fine-tuning adjustments in context, but is faced with the problem of how to articulate this in outreach to unfamiliar colleagues and contexts. I argue that during the research period this problem is unacknowledged in the policy. Context was acknowledged in the 2006 consultation but not explicit in the 2007 standards although it might be implied in the requirement to *work effectively with staff and leadership teams beyond their own school*. (Appendix A)

For Schön, such terms as wisdom and artistry are misleading, because they are too closely linked with elusive terms such as mystery and intuition. He rejects the idea that artistry or superior performance cannot be explained. Rather, he proposes that this form of knowing is in the action, and is so important that it is exactly what we should be researching, even though it is not easy to articulate. This same idea was expressed by the DfES Innovations Unit to Leading Edge schools, all of them having a mandate to disseminate practice to other schools, which is necessary in collaborative work to "*make the skill set explicit ...as this does not happen by osmosis*". This is important, because the whole premise of outreach is that good practice can be transferred.

ASTs give credence to the idea of learning on the job. Schön goes as far as to argue that knowledge acquired in Higher Education is inadequate, since it is based on a technical-rational and positivist view of applying rules. Instead, he argues for a radical redesign of professional education. “*We ought to study the experience of learning by doing and the artistry of good coaching...*” (Schön 1987, p. 17). This idea of studying and valuing practice is also developed by Shulman (2004). He argues for researchers working alongside practitioners in order to understand “*the practical pedagogical wisdom of able teachers*”. According to Shulman, practitioners’ work should not be romanticized but analysed:

*“Wise practitioners vary...practitioners are not always wise...
In our research we do not fall into the trap of simply treating
anything practitioners do as worthy of emulation”* (Shulman, 2004,
p. 265).

This is important, as it reflects other debates about the relationship between practitioners and the role of research education (Hargreaves 1997). As outlined in chapter 1, there is an economic and political context for the shift to school-based professional development, and the AST model represents a development of this concept.

Hence an important idea that emerges from the reflective-practice literature is that of learning from situations which might not go according to plan. When things go wrong or seem incongruous, in the reflective-practice model this presents an opportunity for learning. For Shulman, this means looking afresh at the messy reality and the puzzles that emerge in complex classroom environments. Shulman is critical of research that disregards contexts such as the differences between subjects, classrooms and students, which tend to be “*typically ignored in the quest for general principles of effective teaching*”. By contrast, this study is not seeking to develop general principles of effective AST practice, but to understand how the ASTs might operate in particular contexts. The concept of reflective practice takes into account the notion of context. Shulman (2004) argues that classrooms are very complex environments:

*“the only time a physician could possibly encounter a
situation of comparable complexity would be in the emergency*

room of a hospital during a natural disaster”.

(Shulman 2004, p. 259)

He proposes developing case histories as a form of codified representation of practice. In the conclusion, I return to this idea as a possible development activity for ASTs.

Similarly for Schön (1987), the ability of problem-solving *in situ* and of having to rethink internalised theories and move through a temporary state of incongruity is important and worthy of study:

“careful examination of artistry... that it is the competence by which practitioners actually handle indeterminate zones of practice” (Schön 1987, p. 13).

I relate this to those types of AST outreach experiences in which the ASTs have to readjust their theories in order to be able to respond to new problems in new contexts. I acknowledge the concept of indeterminate zones of practice in the title, *Crossing the Borders*, where the borders are not only geographical but also refer to reflective practice, context and collaboration, and also to new ways of looking at teacher work.

Related literature on mentoring, coaching and advisory teachers

There is a vast body of literature about teacher development, including mentoring. This section brings together the ideas most relevant to the discussion of reflective practice in AST outreach.

One recurrent theme in research is that of stages of development. This refers to the stages of individual teacher development (Berliner 1993) and multiple models of intervention in mentoring (Joyce & Showers 1996). This rationale, namely that teachers are not a heterogeneous group, is relevant to the different types of outreach work seen in operation. Berliner proposes five stages, ranging from novice to expert. However, according to Day (1999), such a model of linear stages is not accurate. Berliner compares differences in timing, routines, degrees of deliberate choices, and degrees of teacher flexibility. Berliner sees experts belonging to the last two stages as often being critical of their own performance and needing emotional involvement in doing well. I understand this to refer to a personal

commitment and a personal stake in the work, as opposed to just going through the motions. I note this in relation to the data that

demonstrates ASTs to be generally passionate and enthusiastic about teaching.

Emotional responses and feelings about teaching have been studied from the point of view of teachers' motivation (Day 1999; Berliner 1993;) and also likely effect on pupils (Sutton & Wheatley 2003). Emotional aspects may be under-researched but are none the less pertinent to understanding responses to change and aspects of leadership (Hargreaves, A. 1994) According to Day, a wider life history is necessary for understanding the context of teachers' work. The ASTs in my sample also referred to respecting other teachers' affective and emotional involvement with their own work. This is important, because it suggests the importance that ASTs attach to developing professional relationships. It also implies that through its emphasis on building confidence and trust, their outreach work is likely to consist of much more than an exchange of teaching tips.

The concept of stages of development is also found in mentoring literature, particularly in the idea of transitioning from mere demonstration to critical enquiry. I researched the concept of mentor, starting with its roots in Greek epics and extending to contemporary references to mentors in business and emerging professional standards for teachers as mentors. Whether ASTs in outreach were just like mentors was one of the initial questions guiding the literature review.

One respondent in my sample, who had worked previously as a university training mentor, saw the ASTs' lack of status as difficult to cope with compared with the formal mentor relationship. I understood this to mean that offers of AST outreach support might be perceived as merely informal and optional. The literature made me question the extent to which AST outreach was a formal or informal role, and I found they used their own informal networks. In comparison, much of the literature about teacher mentoring in the UK referred to the formal role of the mentor in initial teacher training, with or without the involvement of higher education. Also,

in the US there is a formal process of supervision of teachers by principals. This also differs from the role played by ASTs in this sample, who did not generally want a formal performance management role, but a more supportive one. The raising of this point in the mentoring literature made me reconsider the implications of formal and informal purposes, as well as those of hierarchy and status, within the outreach relationships.

Kerry and Shelton-Mayes (1995) refer to different models of mentoring, and these were helpful in thinking about AST activities. The apprenticeship and competency models seem less relevant to ASTs. They might be more relevant to Initial Teacher Training, since in that situation there would be a clear designation of roles and work guided by externally set professional standards. However, there may still be some relevance, since some ASTs working in training schools do have a specific ITT role, including one informant from Hillshire who was left out of the analysis. The competency model might also have some links to the vignette of the school in special measures where ASTs were monitoring classroom teaching according to a specific Ofsted rubric. The reflective model was the one preferred by Kerry and Shelton-Mayes as a way to promote critical reflection. This links to earlier concepts of reflective practice as a long process, and how much time is spent in outreach:

“to facilitate this process, mentors need to be able to move from being a model and instructor to a co-enquirer.” (Kerry & Shelton-Mayes 1995, p. 21)

It also has implications for the quality of what can be done in outreach, and whether ASTs are comfortable with the critical-enquiry aspect of their role.

Similarly, McIntyre and Hagger (1996) suggest that ideally, effective mentoring reduces professional isolation, and generates confidence and performance feedback. They also stress the need for critical awareness rather than the simple exchange of tips (1996). According to Burgess and Butcher (1999) there may a lack of challenge in mentoring relationships. The relevant issue for ASTs is how feasible it is to attain a stage of challenge, or whether this is merely an aspiration. Just as Berliner’s expert-teacher stage might never be achieved by some teachers, so some mentors or

ASTs might never reach the critical exchange stage, especially as my data suggests that much of outreach is *ad-hoc* and not necessarily long-term.

I found that the literature on mentoring did have some relevance to research on outreach, despite its differences from mentor-trainee relationships. It was especially helpful to consider the literature on the difficulties involved in mentoring. For example, Dart and Drake (1996) refer not only to the need for socialization into a school culture, but also to the subject departments' culture. This would include understanding tacit assumptions about how to teach the subject and the need for flexibility in adapting to changing curricula.

The literature on coaching, specifically peer coaching, is distinct from the literature about UK mentoring, although I found the term used interchangeably in Hillshire with reference to a specific mentoring project. This was based on Joyce and Showers (2006) and the Annenberg Institute where peer coaching in the US relates to strategies in specific instructional techniques through the use of modelling, observation, feedback, and facilitating groups of teachers. I considered peer coaching as partially relevant, since it involved collaborative relationships and might also relate to negotiating teachers needs (Cordingley et al. 2005). However, I also acknowledged that the US contexts for teaching differ from those found in the UK, particularly regarding the role of the Principal in the formal process of observation as supervision. Joyce and Showers (1996) maintained that joint planning and joint curriculum development was a more collaborative activity than verbal feedback, where it might be confused with supervision. This has echoes in my data with the ASTs' insistence that they did not want to be seen as inspectors, as well as findings on middle leadership, where heads of department were reluctant to take on a formal observation role (Bennett et al. 2003a) unless there was already a collaborative culture.

The idea of professional development operating in different modes at different stages is also taken up by Harland (1990) in a small-scale study of how advisory teachers worked with classroom practitioners in one local authority. Harland proposed a provisional typology of increasing order of difficulty. There is some similarity with ASTs who also work with

classroom practitioners, and who, according to my data, may be working in several modes that sometimes are more akin to training, sometimes are more akin to mentoring, and sometimes are advisory. According to Harland, advisory teachers might not be working in their preferred modes, since they might be constrained by a head teacher's priorities or by misunderstandings of the advisory teacher role. Again, this lends itself to comparisons with ASTs who are constrained in outreach. A major difference, however, is that whereas advisory teachers would solely have been employees of the local authority, ASTs might perceive themselves as owing more loyalty to their home school base, and as having a unique role in outreach.

Harland proposes four modes:

1. Giving materials to motivate teachers and provide entry to school; however, this mode is limited, as it does not address the question of how the extra resources are used.
2. Telling and information exchange to enrich teaching via debriefing sessions and informal conversation, as well as formal in-service; but this mode has limited value.
3. Showing via demonstration and observation of lessons; however, this may lead to imitation without an understanding of theory or internalisation of reasons.
4. Asking why through probing questions and becoming a supportive critical friend is seen as the most difficult and least-used mode, since in some cases it can be a threatening one, and is therefore a high-risk strategy (p. 39).

Although this typology was developed with a limited sample, it has some relevance to ASTs in terms of the wide range of work undertaken in outreach. Harland also differentiates between working with individuals and working with whole departments, of which the latter is more valuable. In my sample Clive referred to working with a whole department, and other ASTs expressed their frustration at working with just one teacher when they could see that what was needed was department-wide reform.

In conclusion, the associated literature on mentoring, coaching and advisory teachers added to the perspectives of reflective practice as being difficult, and perhaps remaining as an ideal to be strived for. An additional and wider perspective on such difficulties is to be found in educational change literature, especially the reasons why “tinkering” reforms do not lead to radical changes in classroom practice. (Tyack and Cuban 1995; Fullan 2001; Hargreaves A., 2003) Taking a wider perspective was also helpful in understanding the factors contributing to the past successes and failures of professional development programmes (Bolam and Weindling 2006), even though the references were not to AST outreach. I bore this range of literature in mind although I did not cover it in depth as it set the scene for the literature on school collaboration which tended to have a positive, futuristic slant.

Key concept: Collaboration

The fourth question, concerning how outreach relates to other collaborative work, is linked here to a review of the literature on the broad theme of school collaboration. In this study, outreach is seen as a form of collaboration, and the use of the term refers to inter-school collaboration via collaborative professional development, as well as via policies encouraging schools to collaborate. This study excludes literature on collaborative learning at the classroom level because the focus is not on the micro-level behaviours of teachers, but on perceptions of outreach, which is a new element of the professional role. Gergen’s (2005) view of collaborative classrooms is that students should be encouraged to engage in active critique as a response to hidden curricula and the perception of students as being empty vessels (p. 182).

A rationale for outreach might be traced to the internal benefits of collaboration, according to school improvement literature (Hopkins 2001; Rosenholtz, 1989; Bruce et al, 1997) and professional development literature (Bolam & Weindling 2006; Osterman & Kottkamp 1993). Here,

collaboration between colleagues in one school is seen as likely to encourage ownership of ideas. Collaboration between schools was less fully explored in the literature. According to Fielding et al. (2005), collaboration is essentially a social process rather than a content-driven one, and this fits with my findings. In this section I also draw on the associated literature concerning communities of practice, teacher leadership, and network learning (Wenger 1998; Veugelers & O'Hair 2005; Liberman 2000), which are helpful for understanding the potential of ASTs when working with other teachers.

I argue that outreach is one of a series of policy attempts to develop inter-school collaboration as a component of area-wide school improvement. For example, during the period of this study there was growing support for the idea of groups of local schools working together for the common good. According to Brighouse (2005) "*no school alone can meet all the needs of all their pupils*", and he advocated clusters of schools or collegiates.

Literature and policy discourse views the collaboration ideal as a vehicle for system-wide change. One view is that there needs to be radical policy transformation through roles and practices as well as through institutions, structures and cultures. Innovation networks are seen as being part of the vision of a new teaching profession (Hargreaves, D. 2003, p. 35). This view is revisited in this section in relation to the emerging literature on networks.

At the policy level, the discourse of collaboration was associated with innovation and transformation of the secondary school system through specialisation and sharing good practice among schools. (DfES 2003a; DfES 2003b; Woods et al. 2006) Funding was available to develop partnerships under a number of government initiatives (Glatter 2003), and examples of these included: Federations (renamed Education Improvement Partnerships), Excellence in Cities, Extended Schools, Specialist Schools, Beacon Schools (later re-branded as Leading Edge Schools), as well as the London Challenge. Other relevant projects with similar knowledge-sharing aims were Networked Learning Communities, coordinated by the National College of School Leadership, and head teachers mentoring other head

teachers. Several evaluations of these major policies emerged or were being carried out during the research period.

The promotion of collaboration also implied a forward-looking, twenty-first-century view:

“Schools can no longer think of themselves as corner shops... to impact on teaching and learning, collaboration has to happen through teachers” (Gibbons², 2003).

This role for teachers is an important one in this study on outreach, and it might imply other informal forms of teacher collaboration.

Several commentators (Reynolds 2003; Whitty 2002) pointed out the inherent contradiction in encouraging collaboration between schools which may also be competing in a market system. For example, schools might not want to give away their secrets:

“How can you have markets and then expect schools to behave as if market rewards don’t exist? My own impression is that there is pitifully little transfer of good practice going on and that even with so called collaborative schools there will be precious little in future” (Reynolds 2003).

I came back to this point after my data revealed that one AST had been recruited by an outreach school. This might be seen as “poaching”, or might reflect local tensions in teacher recruitment. Reynolds argues for schools to learn from their own best practice and inner variation (Reynolds 2003).

Another policy tension was that collaborative work did not count in external measures:

“Currently attention by school staff to the individual interests of their schools is reinforced by the national accountability system which focuses on the performance and inspection of individual schools. While this situation persists it will continue to act as a constraint on the development of collaborative arrangements.” (Woods et al. 2006, p. 6)

² Director, DfES Innovations Unit, Leading Edge Schools Conference, July 2003.

This point about the incentive for collaboration is also discussed by Fielding et al.

I looked to the literature on collaboration because I first assumed that ASTs were operationalising inter-school collaboration or a formal partnership, and the initial title of this thesis was “*Partnership in Practice?*” I retitled it on the basis of early data analysis showing ASTs operating in solo or other modes rather than via official partnerships.

The wider policy context of secondary reform was therefore helpful to my fourth research question regarding how outreach related to other collaborative work. This still left a lack of example and theory of AST outreach. What did collaboration look like, and what were the implications for relationships, roles and professional development? Of all the emerging literature, I drew most on an emerging study on the factors affecting the transfer of good practice by some leading academics and the think tank Demos (Fielding et al. 2005). This fitted my own initial interest in outreach as a way to critique the assumptions behind policies on the transfer of good practice, based on a practitioner hunch that this would not be as easy as it sounded. I had access to an internal 2004 report, and was able to make comparisons with the final report. The sample included Beacon and Leading Edge schools, plus data from ASTs and the recipients of AST work. The emergence of the work of Fielding et al. at this time also showed the topicality of my questions for a professional doctorate. In many cases, the work of Fielding et al. strongly confirmed my own emerging findings and also helped me to develop my analysis further, especially regarding the reasons as to why outreach might be challenging not just at LEA and operational level but also in terms of professional relationships between individuals and between communities. Fielding et al. examined the factors involved in the transfer of good practice, based on interviews with 120 practitioners and thirteen ASTs. The key features discussed were:

1. Shared ownership
2. Trusting relationships
3. Challenge and support
4. Evaluation

5. Brokerage
6. Equal status between partners
7. Active learning roles

I return to this model of collaboration in my findings chapters, especially with regard to relationships and equal status between partnerships. I also report on the extent of the lack of trust in outreach, as well as on some other problems that affect it, such as head teachers blocking ASTs' timetables. Taylor and Jennings (2004) reported other outreach problems, but also cases where outreach works well because senior management have set the tone for building networks. Crucially, the study of Fielding et al. also argues that the term "knowledge transfer" has no currency because it is not a one-way transfer, but suggests a better term for what is going on, namely "*joint practice development*" (p. 32) in order to underline the existence of mutual exchange and the creation of new knowledge. This is something that is reflected in my findings and which I relate to the term "collegiality", a term taken from the literature of school improvement. In the conclusion I discuss the practical implications, including the implications for the limited evaluation of AST work, which arise from joint effort and ownership.

Whether school partners should be of equal status, or whether this matters for the transfer of good practice, is open to debate. The data of Fielding et al. includes a negative example of an unequal exchange:

"it was discussed in terms of the Beacon thing being a two-way programme. It wasn't – we go there and worship the Beacon...I don't think anybody ever came here. So there is a certain sense of poor relations there and yet I think that if they had the same mix of kids that we've got they probably wouldn't do a hugely different job of it." (Fielding et al. 2005, p. 6).

This is also related to the difference in confidence levels between teachers in schools, with the status of a school often being linked both to performance data and to the idea of good practice (p. 76). I revisited this point in relation to AST outreach during the later stages of analysis, and considered how the unequal status of schools in terms of external indicators (such as their place in the local school hierarchy according to league table

results, parent perceptions and teacher perceptions) might relate to finding outreach work via the ASTs' informal and formal networks.

The question of unequal status between schools can be related to wider concepts deriving from the sociology of education and its debates on structural inequalities and homogenous or heterogeneous groups. In particular, Hargreaves' (Hargreaves D, 2003) notion of social capital includes the human resources available via connections and networks. With reference to schools, Hargreaves distinguishes between intellectual capital (including human capital), social capital and organizational capital (including leadership opportunities to mobilize intellectual and social capital). Social capital may be invisible, and may include trust. In the findings chapters I discuss how the ASTs' outreach work may be seen as an extension of the schools' social capital.

'Autonomy' and 'agency' and 'individual actors' are closely-related sociological terms. The definition of "autonomy" differs from "agency", with its sociological roots, in the degree of self-determination and independent action (Marshall 1994 p. 7, p. 23). AST autonomy is preferable because it links to the government policy on "earned autonomy" for some schools with Leading Edge or Academy status. This is relevant to a view of the ASTs as individual actors, and to the question of whose agenda ASTs are following in outreach. Connelly and James (2006) argue that it is possible for different actors to have different goals and intentions in a collaboration. This was reflected in my data in the tension between ASTs conducting outreach with autonomy, see for example the vignette in chapter 4, compared to ASTs where outreach was an extension of a school's local social capital. An example of this was prioritizing feeder primary schools or representing the school at a conference in outreach time. In the case of AST group work as described in the vignette in chapter 6, I argue that this is closer to agency.

Woods et al. (2006) found that school collaboration was strongest in the urban context. Here, ASTs were important and had strong local links. For example, groups of head teachers were collaborating through formal

partnerships, including promoting teacher development across schools and themselves funding ASTs instead of the local authority doing so. This changed the management of the AST outreach work.

Collaboration is an important theme running through the literature of school improvement and professional development, where internal collaboration can be observed, and where collegial cultures especially are often presented as positive school development indicators and are regarded as fostering the development of a climate that is conducive to learning. I tried to look beyond the positive presentation of school collaboration, which was often an untested ideal devoid of detailed analysis concerning how it is being carried out at teacher level or how it works in practice. Stoll and Fink (1996) point out the criticisms of the generalisability of findings on school effectiveness: “*what works in one context may lack relevance in others*” (Stoll and Fink 1996, p. 36). Here, ‘context’ is defined as the location, background or socio-economic status of pupils and their phase of schooling. This is relevant in outreach work, and as is seen in the findings chapters, the assumption has been that learning and transfer of good practice can take place across contexts, such as between primary and secondary schools, and between schools with very different exam results.

Associated concepts: collegiality and autonomy

The first connotation of ‘collaboration’ at the inter-school level has been discussed. The second connotation in this study is collaboration as it occurs in outreach relationships. I place special emphasis on the concepts of collegiality and autonomy, which have been selected from the literature as ones that are relevant to outreach.

The concept of collegiality is borrowed from the literature in relation to findings, even though it is not a word that is used directly by the ASTs. According to Bennett, Crawford and Riches (1992), collegiality is seen as

“... a means of creating unity by involving staff in the policymaking and decision-making process ... it is that by

which the decision is more likely to be put into practice.”

(Bennett, Crawford and Riches 1992, p. 10)

This is related to data in the findings chapters of an assumption on the part of local authority and DfES officers that ASTs' role is as credible grassroots champions.

Hargreaves (1994) traces the notion of collegiality to classic works by Rosenholtz (1989), and Stenhouse (1985). Here, collegiality is a key part of the reforms to restructure schools from within. It also functions as a bridge between school improvement and teacher development, and as an essential element in the implementation of centralized curriculum reform.

Most of the literature views collegiality positively especially those from the perspective of project participants (Telford 1996; Frost et al. 2000).

However, Hargreaves (1991) is distinctive in pointing to critiques of collegiality, and in introducing an alternative perspective. He contrasts Rozenholtz's view of a benevolent shared culture with Ball's (1987) micro-political perspective of power and control, "*collegiality as an unwanted managerial imposition from the point of view of teachers ...*" – in other words, a way of forcing through external mandates. This is important, as it may be the case that AST outreach work is imposed on teachers.

Hargreaves' critique is developed in a later work (2003), where he refers to "*performance training sects*." The word 'sect' has overtones of dancing to someone else's tune, of brainwashing, of jumping through circus hoops and loss of autonomy. I would link this view with that expressed in critiques of competency approach in terms of the narrowness of box ticking. A concept emerging from Hargreaves' work is of collegiality as compulsory, inflexible and implementation-oriented. This is imposed or *contrived collegiality*. This negative view is the very opposite of the passion and spontaneity seen in the 'blue skies' vision of a learning community (Wenger 1998; Hargreaves, D 2003).

Just as collegiality may be seen as a double-edged sword, there is more than one way to view the closely-associated theme of autonomy. In the literature, negative examples include a lack of teacher autonomy in the case of externally-imposed professional development models which do not take into

account specific contexts or needs; it is the very opposite of shared ownership. Another negative example would be a lack of professional autonomy in deciding what and how to teach. This is related to a wider international debate about the deprofessionalisation and deskilling of teachers through standardization and central curricula. The historical importance of this debate is noted in the discussion, since it is possible that ASTs are implicated in the phenomenon, although this issue is not covered in detail in this study.

A benign view of AST outreach work might regard it as revolving around collaboration and collegial relations. Under this view, the AST might be a catalyst between teachers who together are taking control of their own professional development agenda, and who are exercising autonomy and developing joint knowledge as opposed to having it done to them. This view is discussed in the findings chapters. The opposite, negative, view would be that ASTs, particularly in an outreach context, might be just another kind of performance trainer, with the teacher recipients of the ASTs' work having no say in the matter (this view is also discussed in the findings chapters). For example, ASTs on outreach may meet with resistance if they have been imposed by a head teacher, or, if a school is in special measures, by a local authority. This also relates to examples in the findings chapters of autonomy-related tensions in which an AST on outreach relishes a new professional autonomy within their role on the one hand, but where this kind of autonomy does not necessarily extend to non-AST teachers on the other hand. Discussions of these issues of collegiality and autonomy can be found in related literature about professional development and teacher leadership.

Within the extensive literature on professional development, I focused on reviews which illustrated long-standing issues (collegiality, autonomy, evaluation) and lessons learnt about effectiveness. One consistent message was the importance of using mixed methods in CPD, and of the school developing ownership (Bolam and Weindling 2006). Despite the lessons contained in the literature, at the practitioner level ASTs might be restricted to using just one or two methods in their outreach work.

Again, the theme of teachers working together was important for ensuring the embeddedness of CPD. “Collaborative CPD” in this literature refers mainly to teachers within a single school, although in this study of outreach it is understood as occurring between and across schools. Collaborative CPD in this case meant teachers working together on a sustained basis with or without HEI or LEA involvement. The results were positive concerning the links between collaborative CPD and increased teacher confidence and enthusiasm, as well as students’ learning outcomes. According to the review, the success factors included: coaching and peer support rather than leadership; use of observation; scope for the participants to choose and identify priorities; and processes to encourage and extend professional dialogue. I kept in mind the possible relevance of the findings, particularly those concerning sustainability, both to evaluation and to the conditions for AST outreach as a form of professional development. “Sustainability” also relates to the issue of how to measure AST impact. This is considered in relation to the role of local authority management of ASTs.

It is acknowledged that some of the outreach in this sample might not comprise sustained or collaborative professional development, and the conclusions chapter contains discussion about the implications and lessons learnt from past CPD.

Associated literature: teacher leadership

This study could have considered ASTs from the point of view of capacity building and leadership. I was more interested in the outreach issues at the AST level, as well as in the notion of AST outreach as a form of professional development. For the question of how outreach relates to other forms of collaboration, I considered the extent to which ASTs on outreach could be seen to be exercising teacher leadership. Teacher leadership is closely aligned with the concept of distributed leadership (Frost and Harris 2003; Bennett et al. 2003b), and is seen as a resource for school improvement. Its knowledge-related, decision-making and development activities are seen as shared and emergent property, as opposed to

originating from the apex of an organization. There has been little research about the effect of teacher leadership in the UK, and most studies refer to North American literature (Harris and Muijs 2003).

Despite finding the ASTs' "*pedagogical leadership*" referred to in DfES documents (2001), I did not find the same term being used in fieldwork, even though the ASTs in my sample were arguably demonstrating leadership through their work. Sandra's view is that she was a "*leader by example*." I decided to explore the theoretical background to teacher leadership for possible relevance. Most of the literature took a promotional angle to teacher leadership. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) address practitioners. They include a self-evaluation tool, and strongly advocate teacher leadership as a form of professional development within learning communities. This might have been more appropriate for an action research project or a one-school in-depth study where ASTs were researching their own practice, but was not feasible for me as an external researcher to apply. In chapter 7, I recommend that ASTs should have the potential to lead action research.

I found further critique in Harris and Muijs (2003), especially in their pointing to the caution expressed by Frost and Harris (2003) that models such as instructional leadership may be a top-down way of improving teaching, and may be linked to the carrying-out of standardized reforms. Could the ASTs similarly be seen as imposing external mandates? I considered this again when comparing ASTs with government-funded Key Stage strategy consultants who were also working in several schools. The concept is also considered in relation to the notion of contrived collegiality discussed in the next section.

Harris and Muijs (2003) suggest three factors which might influence the extent of leadership for teachers. These are: the construction of the professional role; the organizational environment; and personal capacity. I would agree with this, and relate it to the AST-specific literature on how the organizational environment might include differences in how local authorities deploy ASTs. I also agree with Harris and Muijs' (2003) model in relation to my findings of local contextual inter-school factors, including

the additional factor of the differences that exist among ASTs in the extent of their autonomy to carry out their professional outreach role. This indicates that collaboration between organisations is complex, and that to understand it attention must be paid to the issues of leadership and relationships. Harris and Muijs (2003) cite Hargreaves (Hargreaves D, 2003) on the importance of trust, and this also relates to findings by Fielding et al. (2005) and to the concept of social capital as reflected in the extent and quality of the networks between its members and its external partners.

I return to this concept of social capital in my findings where some ASTs saw outreach work as enhancing the reputation of their home school, with their role being that of ambassador.

I concluded that the framework of teacher leadership was relevant, and it informed my thinking on the potential importance of various factors in the home school that lay beyond the scope of this study of outreach. The teacher leadership model would have been more appropriate for a different type of study, perhaps for considering a whole-school organisation, or for how the AST role will develop in the future.

Associated literature: communities and networks

In the data collection, I learned that ASTs were sometimes working in groups, as described in the vignettes. I considered whether working in groups might be linked to the idea of a learning organisation (O'Neill 1995) or network. Perhaps ASTs were catalysts for further activity? However I did not expect all AST groups to represent learning communities (Wenger 1998) or learning networks (Lieberman 2000). The data led me to reconsider selected literature on communities, including communities of practice, teacher learning communities, and network learning. What these have in common is advocating and analyzing a shift away from professional isolation towards more collaborative learning and knowledge creation.

The idea of teacher learning through such collaborative efforts might be appropriate to ASTs on outreach work. This literature therefore helped to further critique a conceptualisation of outreach as simple good-practice transfer, or the exchange of tips between peers. The findings of Fielding et al. (2005) are particularly important to this study, especially because relationships turn out to be more important than a simple content model of transfer. Collaboration via teacher learning communities might offer a different way of developing joint knowledge or emergent knowledge. Fielding et al. (2005) propose that local authorities should map existing social network relationships between teachers in order to identify hubs of connectivity (p. 75). This might be a suitable topic for a future study of ASTs. I make guarded recommendations from my limited data, including the potential to build on informal teacher networks.

Paavola et al. (2004) compare and contrast the origins of three models of innovative knowledge communities. These transcend a division into either an individual acquisition model or a social practices model, and instead refer to communal knowledge participation models. Here, problem solving and moving beyond constraints is a social process involving making knowledge explicit, where the norm is reflecting and “*questioning and various disturbances to initiate cycles of innovation*” (p. 564). This may produce new knowledge, artefacts or practices collaboratively. This is seen as a present-day challenge for the development of individual and collective competencies that go beyond prevailing practices. Reference is made to the specific issues for schools, including Engeström et al.’s (2002) change laboratory interventions in schools, which acknowledge that the “*teachers’ tradition of working as isolated individual professionals*” is among the factors making school change difficult. Reference is also made to the “knowledge creating school” (Hargreaves D, 1999) that involves deliberate efforts to “*articulate teachers’ professional experiences into shareable knowledge within and between schools.*” Such articulation echoes the reflective practice ideas of Shulman (2004) and the notion of shareable knowledge is a central issue for Fielding et al. (2005).

The framework of Paavola et al. (2004) was helpful in considering the potential for ASTs to be seen as members of innovative knowledge-creating

communities, in that they have a collaborative role. It was also helpful in considering the opposite view of the limitations of AST outreach such as working with individuals without sustainability. Under a model of shared collaborative knowledge creation, the individual “superteacher” model of ASTs is inadequate.

I also considered the associated emerging literature on networking, because it contrasts with older ideas of individualisation plus institutional and professional isolation. Networking is presented as a knowledge-sharing collaborative professional development experience:

“The most important characteristic of networks involves the learning of colleagues within and across schools. In networks, teachers and principals learn from colleagues in other schools which helps them to deepen the learning in their own school. It is a collegial horizontal way of learning. Teachers and principals reflect on their experiences, construct new knowledge, and develop skills and attitudes that enhance student achievement. Networking helps to develop trust among the members which allows an open forum for collective enquiry to emerge. It creates a structure within which new meaning can be explored and difficult questions asked. Learning in networks, as supported by the examples in the book, is a social constructivist practice.” (Veugelers & O’Hair, 2005a, p. 211-212)

In this study, outside knowledge from a university does not feature. The presence of a university in a collaboration or network might be expected explicitly to promote the use of theory as a tool to analyse practice, and to broaden discussions beyond pure experience. This relates to the view of Libermann (2000) that successful professional development and sustainable networks will draw on different tools by drawing together people with different ways of

“... acquiring, developing and using knowledge...Keeping a balance between inside knowledge (the experiential knowledge of teachers) and outside knowledge (knowledge created by research and conceptualization) is a hallmark of successful collaboratives.” (Libermann, 2000, p. 223).

This may be one way of seeing the role of ASTs: as external agents bringing in new practice-based perspectives and engaging schools and teachers in multiple ways in a similar manner to the old advisory teachers. An alternative view might be that ASTs do not have enough access to conceptual models or collective enquiry to be able to offer a real balance of perspectives.

Veugelers and O'Hair (2005b, p. 2) make the case for networking and introduce it as drawing on a range of scholarly traditions. I was especially interested in positional networking as deriving from sociological and structural ideas on how position and roles determine who networks with whom. For example, I considered whether this might relate to differences in schools' readiness to collaborate with ASTs' multiple networks, not only within their local authorities but also in school networks such as the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust referred to in the vignettes. Other forms of networking were related to an understanding of organizational culture or networked societies based on fluid boundaries and interactions with diverse others. These ideas were beyond the scope of this study to explore.

For Libermann (2000), educational reform networks, partnerships and collaboratives are well suited to the borderless flexible era of technological change, because they can be organised around participant needs and change quickly. Schools, by contrast, are seen as traditional and bureaucratic. Networks are seen as a better option for knowledge creation than traditional professional development, where teachers might be passive receivers of "one size fits all" models of development imposed by outside experts. Networks are seen as complex learning communities of teacher learning built on trust, risk taking, openness, dialogue, and a balance of work revolving around practice or other knowledge. I noted that this literature was largely based on studies of professional communities in the USA in the 1990s, which might differ from the local UK contexts of the ASTs in my 2003-2006 sample. During the course of this study, other studies about networked learning in the UK and the English context were emerging and relevant. I also noted that the issues of sustainability and the costs of networks were not always considered.

The ideas of Wenger (1998) and others on communities of practice were also potentially relevant to outreach. The question of outreach as a form of learning through social participation, and the potential for the AST role in such a community, is further explored in the findings chapters and the conclusion. However, merely belonging to a formal AST group would not necessarily constitute a community of practice, since such a community might be more informal or fluid in format.

“Most communities of practice do not have a name and do not issue membership cards” (Wenger 1998, p. 7).

In my data, ASTs used informal links to develop outreach. By way of background, the concept of communities of practice arose from earlier ethnographic studies by Lave and Wenger (1991) on apprenticeship. Learning through social participation is seen to have the potential to shape individual experience and identity and to transform communities. It is presented as a new concept midway between theories of social structure and theories of situated experience.

There are plenty of caveats attached to over-idealizing the communities-of-practice idea, and it is not a synonym for any team or network. Crucially for the study of outreach, participation is not seen as being the same as harmony or collaboration, as it may include conflict and competition. The conditions it requires are:

1. mutual engagement
2. joint enterprise
3. shared repertoire, including shared discourse.

In the vignette in chapter 6, an example of shared enterprise between teachers and ASTs from several school communities would be the software review project in Hillshire.

Boundaries are a key idea in the notion of communities of practice. At first sight this seems to fit with an AST stepping across professional role limits and school and classroom boundaries. The findings distinguish between the ASTs in the school community and the AST community.

The other key idea concerns brokering. ASTs could be regarded as brokering their ideas and knowledge about practice through their outreach work between school communities. One of Wenger's key points (1998) is about brokers making new connections. This is consistent with the vignette of Clive, who was able to help a teacher in a special school make connections with a teacher in a primary school, as well as with his home school and the advisory service. Wenger also points out that:

"Brokering is complex...It requires enough legitimacy to influence the development of a practice, to mobilize attention and to address conflicting interests...to cause learning".

(Wenger 1998, p. 109)

The complexity and legitimacy fits with my data, especially in situations where ASTs realized that the head teacher and teacher interests might be in conflict. The vignette of the school in special measures in chapter 5 illustrates that external ASTs were not seen as legitimate by all teachers, but teachers from other schools who were known and with whom contact had been established through the specialist trust were allowed in.

This links with the issues faced by ASTs who realize that their value lies in being an outsider, and who have to put up with the sense of isolation that came through in my data.

"Uprootedness is an occupational hazard of brokering... brokers sometimes interpret the uprootedness in terms of individual inadequacy... Brokers must often avoid two opposite tendencies – being pulled in to become full members and being rejected as intruders. Indeed their contributions lie in being neither in nor out." (Wenger 1998, p. 110)

The brokering concept was also helpful in analyzing data on the negative and uncomfortable feelings among some ASTs, including some sense of a lack of legitimacy. This may alter if ASTs become part of senior management, because outreach may be seen as an extension of a school partnership rather than an informal agreement.

Wenger (1998) also considers different types of boundary-crossing which is relevant to ASTs crossing into other school communities and facilitating the

brokering of ideas between schools. He compares a one-on-one conversation or a one-on-one visit and one-on-one immersion with the more preferable two-way delegations from several members. This may also go some way to explaining why an electronic conference for ASTs was not thriving perhaps reflecting the lack of a national AST community compared to a local AST community. This relates to my list of what counts as outreach, and the extent to which it was two-way. A balance between *participation*, such as meetings, with *reification*, such as documents, is seen as necessary for visitors who are crossing boundaries.

“It is often a good idea to have artefacts and people travel together...given enough legitimacy, visitors with carefully composed paraphernalia of artefacts can provide a substantial connection indeed.” (Wenger 1998, p. 112).

I compare this reference to artefacts with the loan of resources by ASTs including a box of turtles in Science outreach, and a collection of sewing machines for D&T outreach.

Hargreaves (Hargreaves, D. 2003) sees ICT as having the potential to engage networks of enthusiasts if they are isolated in their own schools. His vision of innovation and networks includes the idea of *practitioner champions* and *advocate champions*, who are crucial:

“they are the mediators who link the less entrepreneurial practitioner champions to others to bridge the process of innovation transfer.” (Hargreaves, D. 2003, p. 50)

This is of interest to ASTs as personal mediators of ideas in the course of their outreach.

This compares with Shulman’s ideas of visible and invisible colleges, where ‘invisible colleges’ means knowledge gained from collaborative work with schools beyond the home school. He is aware of the economic reasons why this form of collaboration has to be limited, but says that more collaborative structures are needed. This links with my data, where despite readiness and goodwill on the part of the individual AST to engage in collaborative work, there was sometimes a lack of infrastructure to support it. This is discussed further in the findings chapters.

In conclusion, some relevant links are noted in this literature, although it was not possible to rigorously test any of the models of communities of practice or network learning against my data in a systematic way. I acknowledged that the ASTs belonged to multiple formal professional groups, which might or might not be considered learning communities, or simply to groups. These included: home school subject groups; networks associated with the school, such as Specialist Schools and Academies Trust; groups of other ASTs set up by the local authority; and overlapping informal networks.

In this chapter, I have argued that understanding how the ASTs outreach processes has been helped by the literature which looks beyond operational difficulties. I agree that ASTs have an opportunity and a licence for undertaking reflective practice, and I agree that the national economic and policy contexts and the discourse about collaboration are important background factors. An alternative study might have considered reflection, collaboration or context as a single important framework. The overlap between all three is important for this study in explaining how ASTs attempt to use knowledge and experience in new flexible situations that cross boundaries.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Chapter Overview

This chapter provides a rationale for the methods used and how they relate to educational research traditions. Appendices B and D relate to this chapter.

Rationale for methodology

This study looks at human interaction and is located in the qualitative tradition because of the emphasis of different perspectives and the importance of social context. The aim of this study has been to explore the viewpoints of different stakeholders including ASTs themselves, and to understand outreach experiences from their perspective. The unit of analysis was the AST, and this included groups of ASTs. I investigated different contexts of AST outreach experience within a bounded case study between 2003 and 2006. Case study was selected as a way to illuminate the complexities of outreach experience within naturalistic settings. I drew on Bassey's (1999) definition of case study as a "tool of educational research":

"...to develop educational theory and illuminate policy and enhance practice" (p. 3).

Transparency of methodology is important, especially in qualitative research, where there is no built-in control as in an experimental study and the burden of proof is on the researcher to

"provide precise and specific details that offer the reader a front-row seat of the action. The methods of the study should be described in enough detail so that the reader can imagine exactly how they occurred." (McEwan and McEwan 2003, p. 85)

This idea of being convincing to an audience is related to the need for case record notes and an audit trail. I kept a researcher diary with details of contacts and also recorded and transcribed interviews where possible.

A key characteristic of qualitative methodology is that it is inductive and exploratory in nature. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) and other methodology textbooks cite Spradley's (1980) comparison of a petroleum engineer with an explorer. The one may already know where to find oil and want to test it, the other is venturing into an uncharted wilderness. This explorer analogy is of relevance to this study because I needed to readjust my methods in connection with emerging explanations of AST outreach as I went along, rather than testing a hypothesis. Grounded theory allows for the development and revision of hypotheses on an ongoing basis from the data (Glaser and Strauss 1968). The work of the researcher here is to generate theory or explanation from data. The emerging theory points to the next steps in data collection. This method allows flexibility in adjusting for unanticipated contingencies in responses (p. 48) such as readjusting my theories to include ASTs in schools in special measures.

I noted that a feature of case study was that it was both illuminative and interpretive in explaining why things happen. However, there was less agreement on a definition of case study, and some debate on the extent to which case study could or should lead to generalisation. For example, Bassey provides at least three kinds of case study: His particular focus is on theory-seeking and theory-testing case study, and he distinguishes this from narrative and evaluative case study. The findings are disseminated via "fuzzy" generalisation and professional discourse where there is no absolute claim to knowledge. I return to this in the conclusion and express caution about over-generalising from the particular contexts of the ASTs in my case studies.

I acknowledge that my case study method was a hybrid model in design in that it was exploratory in order to illuminate a policy over several sites to reflect different AST contexts. I had professional experience of evaluating a government innovation and I saw some element of evaluation in this small-scale study although I did not expect to evaluate the scheme. A useful description of illuminative evaluation links with the idea of evaluative case study:

"The aims of illuminative evaluation are to study the innovatory programme: how it operates; how it is influenced

by the various school situations in which it is applied; what those directly concerned regard as its advantages and disadvantages...In short it seeks to address and to illuminate a complex array of questions.” (Parlett and Hamilton, quoted in Bassey 1999, pp. 28-29).

For Yin (2003), the rationale for case study is related to the open-ended nature of the questions and need for different strategies dependent on different types of research question, on degree of control, and focus on contemporary rather than historical events: “*Case study has an advantage when a how or why question is being asked about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little control*” (Yin 2003, p. 9). AST policy clearly has a contemporary focus and I did not intervene in or have control in the study.

A key reason for choosing case study was the need for detailed insights into the ASTs’ contexts, especially their local school contexts. This was absent from grey literature references to AST work. One advantage of case study is recognising the embeddedness of social truths in situations and being able to represent conflicts of viewpoint. Case study offers

“in- depth investigation of the interdependencies of the parts and of the patterns that emerge.” (Bassey 1999, p. 23)

Thus in analysing and presenting the data on ASTs’ experiences of outreach, I found that the context of the local authority did have some relevance to the ASTs – see the description of ASTs in groups and teacher networks in chapter 6 – but more important was the local inter-school context as experienced by the ASTs. This included levels of competition or collaboration and extent of personal networks. A follow-up study could design case studies of ASTs in different contexts, such as urban, or consider the home school contexts of the ASTs.

Yin discusses case study design and advises against single case studies because of the need to compare perspectives. In my case study design I first drew up the boundaries of sample selection and expected the AST to be the unit of analysis within the boundary of two local authorities. A holistic case study design could have focused on the local authority as the unit of analysis

and as an organizational study, but such a model might be criticized for being too abstract (Yin 2003, p. 45). I rejected this because the literature review showed that the local authority had already been considered, albeit in report form.

Instead I used the local authority as a context boundary and further narrowed the sampling criteria to two local authorities, and further to sub-groups of Science and English ASTs to allow for internal validity and comparisons. Although I refer to the local authority role this is because it impacts on findings about outreach, although it turned out to be less important than other factors. I do not report in detail on the local authority interviews except as informants and triangulation for AST data.

The case study unit of analysis is the AST, and this is stratified into embedded subunits of ASTs presented as vignettes. Each chapter addresses a key research question with one vignette per chapter to illuminate different contexts of ASTs' work on outreach:

- ASTs working solo with high degrees of autonomy - Chapter 4
- ASTs working in a emergency or deficit situation with less autonomy - Chapter 5
- ASTs working with other groups of ASTs - Chapter 6

Whereas many methodology texts outline the differences between the qualitative and quantitative perspectives, Cohen et al. (2000) go further and outline three broad approaches to educational research: first is the scientific or positivistic approach based on testing and experimentation, the second is an interpretative and subjective approach to interpret the world in terms of its actors, and the third approach, seen as emerging, is critical theory, which takes account of the political and ideological contexts (Cohen et al. 2000, p. 181). I do not use Bourdieu or Foucault in my framework, but I do acknowledge the local socio-political context between schools and the wider policy context.

One of many criticisms of qualitative methods is that:

“immersion in the depths of a qualitative study might lead to

macro blindness. That is to say the researcher might offer explanations in terms of the situation itself and be unaware of possibly more powerful forces operating externally.”

(Open University 2001, p. 66)

To avoid this, I refer to the macro and national context such as AST standards and Specialist Schools Academies Trust, which I explore through ASTs in local contexts with issues such as teacher recruitment, competition and schools in special measures. Other criticisms refer to the problem, especially in looking for theoretical order, that arises from inconsistencies and ambiguity and the subjective nature of interpretation (Burgess 1985).

Yin argues that case study is not necessarily solely qualitative. I justify the use of survey within the case study as a filtering tool. Since gaining access to ASTs was an issue I used survey as one tool to select a sample of Secondary ASTs actively engaged in outreach. Other means of gaining access to AST respondents was via the local authority and contacts made at ASTs conferences. An alternative research design for the question “*what is outreach?*” might have been a large-scale survey to a random sample of ASTs. This might have yielded data on lists of type of outreach activities, and it would have been suitable for measuring frequency of phenomena (Yin 2003, p. 42), although it would not have given the embedded contexts of my multi-site case study.

My data was not from a randomised sample. In narrowing my sample I did not want to research too close to home for reasons of critical distance and anonymity, but I had to have some convenience in travelling to field sites. I avoided unethical role confusion by ruling out doctorate fieldwork in local authorities where I was working on other research projects. As a starting point, I selected two local authorities of similar size and similar mix of rural shires with large towns. This selection was based on DfES recommendation and my own contacts made at Conference A. I acknowledge that if I had selected different categories or sizes of local authorities this might have impacted on the local contexts for the AST (for example, metropolitan areas where teacher shortages led to recruitment and a need for training of overseas teachers which might impact on AST work). Within each local

authority boundary, I narrowed the sample to Secondary ASTs active in outreach.

The key features and boundaries of this case study can be summarised as:

Table 3.1 Case study features

Case study focus	Groups of Secondary ASTs
Subunits/Vignettes	Groups of ASTs in different contexts showing different approaches to outreach (solo, emergency, group)
Time	Data collection 2003-2006, writing to 2007 (note implications for policy changes)
Place	Geographically bounded by the local authorities of Hillshire and Rivershire, two shire local authorities, similar size of AST populations
Hillshire	43 secondary schools (7 grammar), 70 ASTs
Rivershire	34 secondary schools, 60 ASTs

The range of methods represents a hybrid case study model. Each of the methods has its own limitations, as reviewed in this chapter. In particular, case studies have been criticised as not generalisable or representative and depending on the observational strategy and researcher bias. Yin argues that generalisability comes from the generation of theory, which is in turn used to generate other cases.

Another limitation is that I was a sole investigator researching outside my professional context, and an outsider to respondents. This is related to the issue of access and time needed to find respondents and also explains why interviews were conducted after the surveys, allowing for a narrowing of the sample.

In summary, the key reason for case study was to do with the nature of the research questions. Case study was a suitable way of probing more deeply and paying attention to unique features of outreach and of local contexts:

“they speak for themselves. They are strong on reality.” (Nisbett and Watt 1984, in Cohen et al. 2000)

The key features were:

- On-going analysis and generation of grounded theory
- 5 interviews with stakeholders: national level and local level (1 DfES, 4 Local Authority)
- 4 observations at AST conferences
- 4 questionnaires in situ via conferences: 2004, 46 responses; 2006, 14 responses
- 15 AST telephone interviews (transcribed by third party), English and Science
- 3 school visits including observation of outreach session (field notes)
- 2 head teacher interviews

The role of the researcher

My role in the research needs to be acknowledged in terms of possible “reactivity” and how I shaped the research by being pro-active in the sampling process and in the analysis. This involved a process of selecting some data, rejecting other data, and my interpretation. For example, I acknowledge the influence of my professional background as a secondary teacher and researcher as one of the potential filters. The idea of value-free research is seen as problematic by many researchers. It is seen as important to acknowledge how the values and ethics of the researcher can raise issues, since:

“issues and methods can become separated and practitioners left with the impression that they simply have to learn various techniques in order to undertake research.” (May 2001, p. 1)

My professional background is relevant to the methodology in terms of my relationships and access to ASTs. I work in a university, and I am not an AST and am no longer based in a secondary school. Therefore, my first task was to find ASTs as potential respondents and to build up networks of informants. I was aware that there might be some distance between researcher and practitioners, although I hoped that my teacher background and professional experience of visits to schools would create some rapport. I was also working part-time on separate research projects during the period of this doctorate, and this parallel experience helped me reflect on my own professional development as a new researcher.

I hope this background may also have given me some degree of theoretical sensitivity in making decisions about degrees of significance in the large volume of data generated through my professional background. Glaser and Strauss (1968) give the example of a sociology paper based on the experience of a taxi-driver. They see the experience as legitimate data even though it is not based on field notes but on ideas after the job and later systematic theorizing.

“The moral of the story is that we should deliberately cultivate such reflections on personal experiences. Generally we suppress them or give them the status of mere opinions... rather than looking at them as a springboard to systematic theorizing.” (Glaser and Strauss 1968, p. 254)

I agree with the idea of personal experiences as springboards; I see them as critical incidents in developing new directions in the research methodology. In this research, for example, there were several significant turning points which made me re-evaluate the findings.

One such incident was the unexpected setting of outreach in a chicken shed, as described in chapter four. This was certainly a grass-roots approach and helped me see outreach as part of finding immediate practical solutions, and the interaction reflected the importance of the AST in connecting the teacher to wider local networks. This situation was unlike the classroom senior

mentoring situation I had anticipated. It took me back to further comparisons of data on the kind of tasks undertaken in outreach.

The second turning point, the comment of an AST at a school in challenging circumstances, was that most ASTs she met had done their AST accreditation in “*nice schools*”. This made me reconsider whose views might be missing from the sample, including ASTs in schools in special measures. I looked again at the role of the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust in the pilot phase of ASTs. I made some amendments to the fieldwork plan in order to collect further data.

The ASTs respondents in this study

I narrowed the sample of ASTs by going through the questionnaire responses and selecting ASTs who met the criteria of considerable experience of outreach in more than one school and were secondary teachers of Science or English. This was to see if different curriculum areas were associated with differences in outreach experiences. As a former English teacher it was important to select teachers and a subject that I was less familiar with. After the interviews, I further narrowed the sample for ASTs to observation based on the widest range of outreach. Although I could find ASTs via conferences I could not find outreach without permission of access, and this also is reflected in the data collection. I also used stakeholder contacts in local authorities to gain access to additional ASTs, but for ethical reasons did not reveal chosen respondents. I also asked for head teacher contacts for triangulation. This networking method has some similarities with snowball sampling in interviewing where the disadvantage is seen to be the views and perspectives which may be omitted (May, 2001, p. 132). For example, I had less control over LEA-recommended respondents and I was not able to use the data from one respondent in a training school as it had no examples of outreach. This confirmed my earlier decision to interview ASTs directly via conference contacts rather than via a head teacher route.

I approached all ASTs directly to ask for an interview and explain the research. If I had no response after two contacts I did not pursue it, but this only happened in one case. Sara, recommended by the local authority, did not offer examples of outreach as her AST role was quite different in a training school, and her data has not been used. Most interviews were conducted by telephone and the interview transcribed.

Table 3.2 Details of ASTs interviewed (via telephone unless stated)

Respondent	From	Subject	Sex	Date	Other
1.Homer	Othershire	English	M	Nov. 04	Pilot interview. Met 04.
2. Sandra	Hillshire	Science	F	Jan. 05	
3. Mike	H	Science	M	Jan. 05	Met 06
4. Clive	H	Science	M	Dec. 04	1 observation June 05, 2 conference meetings 04, 06
5. Sara	H	English	F	Dec. 04	Teacher training school
6. Anne	H	English	F	Dec. 04	Now a deputy at school in challenging circumstances
7. Bethan	Rivershire	English	F	Dec. 04	
8. Karen	R	Performing Arts & English	F	Nov. 04	Interview at school visit 2004 Also headteacher interview Jan 06
9. Belinda	H	English	F	Nov. 04	Met 06
10. Irene	H	English	F	Feb. 05	Met 06
11. Elizabeth	R	Science	F	Jan. 06	School in special measures
12. Harry	R	Science	M	Jan. 06	
13. Dick	R	Science	M	Jan. 06	
14. Tom	R	Science	M	Jan. 06	
15. Pierre	R	French	M	Feb. 06	Visit 06 School in special measures

Observation

A general rationale for the use of observation methods was to compare AST reports and representations from interview data with ASTs in context and the naturalistic settings of field visits to school sites and AST conferences. A summary of all observations conducted is indicated by Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 Summary of observations

Setting of Observation	Date	Respondent	Workshop topic
Conference A	December 2003	National	Outreach Portfolio preparation
Conference B	March 2004	Hillshire	Behaviour management Ofsted criteria
Conference C	March 2004	Rivershire & neighbouring authorities	Creativity
Conference D	March 2006	Hillshire	Coaching Resources for special needs
School visit		Hillshire outreach	Outreach observation
School visit		Rivershire	AST interview
School visit		Rivershire	AST and head teacher interview

A further rationale for the choice of observation sites was linked to the multi-site nature of the case study and ethical considerations for intrusion and privacy.

“Like other forms of data collection in the human sciences, observation is not a morally neutral enterprise. Observers... have obligations to the participants as well as to the research community.” (Cohen et al. 2000, p. 316)

For example, I asked Clive if I could shadow an outreach session, but left the choice of session up to him, since some situations would be more

sensitive than others. As indicated in chapter 4, the observation in the particular setting of a rural school resulted in the unexpected findings of an AST providing informal and immediate hands-on support as well as the passing on of local networks. The choice of observation and of unstructured observation led to this analysis, which would be missing from an interview report. Another example of observation was developed into a vignette in chapter 5. I visited a school in special measures to understand the setting and spend time in the staff room as well as in formal interviews and collecting documents. I would like to have undertaken more outreach and shadowing, but it took time to build up relationships for access.

The history of participant observation where researchers “*immerse themselves in the day to day activities of the people whom they are trying to understand*” (May 2001, p. 148) can be traced to social anthropology and to the Chicago school of social research from the 1920’s and 1930’s. This represented a shift from the positivist tradition of pre-determined theories, as instead, the focus became discovering meanings in social settings and interactions as a way to understand actions rather than individuals. This method can be seen as non-interventionist and a way “*least likely to lead researchers to impose their own reality on the social world*” (May 2001, p. 153). However, other critics point to the dangers of losing critical perspective, “going native” or the observer effect.

I would not classify my participation at conferences as anywhere near the extremes of covert insider or as complete detachment, such as looking through a two-way mirror at children’s interactions. It was closer to non-participant observation, and has links to ethnographic and naturalistic tradition. The advantage, according to Morrison (1993), (quoted in Cohen et al. 2000, p. 311), is that “*not only will the salient features of the situations present themselves but a more holistic view will be gathered.*” The choice of a collective multiple site case study limited the length of time I had in which to gain trust with participants. By conference D, I had more sense of continuity as a researcher, because I was returning to the annual conference and meeting respondents from interviews and earlier conferences.

In all conference workshops, for ethical reasons I declared who I was at the start of each workshop, but I had no part in directing the proceedings. Note taking from observation of conference break-out workshop groups with ten to twenty participants was a methodological challenge, because of the high number of potentially relevant interactions and observations. Audio recording was impossible due to the noise, and video recording would have been intrusive. During plenary sessions with fifty or so participants, it was easier to make notes about the plenary speaker and reactions, but this did not lead to useful data. Note taking was obviously not possible during conversations at coffee and lunch time, even though I was still taking mental notes and regarded this as potentially useful but unattributed data.

At the stage of analysis of field notes, I first extracted illustrations on outreach and on school contexts as noted by ASTs. I also noted the themes and contents of the sessions, such as creativity and Ofsted criteria, and some of this data proved helpful at a later stage of interview analysis.

After selecting ASTs for interview with sufficient outreach to report, I approached them and asked them if they were willing to take part, and gave them the option to choose the time and place of the interview. Some ASTs requested evening interviews, as they were less likely to be interrupted at home, although Karen asked me to visit her newly-opened campus, a new PFI school in Rivershire, and I did so. A number of school-wide details became relevant as we walked to the interview room which I might not have picked up via telephone. For example, the fact that there was a primary school on site meant that there was flexibility for curriculum links and a culture of innovation in the home school. I later interviewed the head of the same school via telephone without revealing that I had already talked to a member of staff. The head teacher recommendation was made on separate occasions by the DfES and the Rivershire local authority contact, and the fact that I had visited helped me understand the unusual features of the school.

I would like to have visited the home school of all interview respondents and undertaken more shadowing observations of outreach sessions, but I found real restrictions of time and access. Each face-to-face interview or

observation was at least one day of travel time, given the geographical spread of sites. In parallel research projects where I was being paid, one provided fourteen days for my time and I did not make any field visits. I found writing case studies from someone else's data to be very difficult without the context of observation (Bennett et al. 2006). In my other part-time research project, *Diversity Pathfinders*, there were resources for a three-year evaluation and a travel budget. This allowed me to make repeated contact with the same group of head teachers in another part of the county, and to develop research relationships. This combination of experiences provided useful reflection on finding respondents and the need for anonymity in a small area.

Interviews

The purposes of interview in research may range from information gathering to hypothesis testing to follow-up and going deeper into respondents' reasons for responses (Cohen et al. 2000, p. 268). The importance of the interview not only as data gathering, but also as a social encounter, means that as a researcher I aimed to follow ethical and social protocols (Cohen et al. 2000, p. 279). For example, I avoided controversial questions and aimed to be non-threatening.

My first interview was of a DfES officer. Although I had studied the AST website and documentation relating to ASTs, this was no substitute for a face-to-face interview with an officer aware of the history of the policy. For example, I was given an internal document about an earlier national pilot of groups of ASTs. I later followed this up by including a question on ASTs working in groups in my questionnaire design. I was given another document about views on ASTs being part of management. I decided to follow this up in my own questionnaire. The theme of where ASTs sit in relation to senior management came up in interviews, visits and in my analysis of the 2007 new draft standards, even though at the time I did not see it fitting outreach.

I planned to collect core data from ASTs' interviews and after stakeholder interviews with local authority officers. I anticipated that the AST interviews in particular would provide an important source of experience of outreach which might be too subjective and open-ended to emerge in surveys. According to May (2001), "*Interviews yield rich insights into people's biographies, experiences, opinions, values, aspirations, attitudes and feelings*" (May 2001, p. 6). I considered the disadvantages and advantages of the range of interview methods, including structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews; group interviews; and life history. I selected semi-structured interviews as an appropriate way to have some degree of flexibility according to the experiences and views of different AST respondents, and by the use of probes, clarification and elaboration (May 2001, p. 123).

In contrast, the supposed neutrality of the researcher associated with completely structured and standardised interviews did not seem appropriate, even though this method might make comparability easier. Following an introductory letter, one respondent e-mailed me to ask what "working with teachers in other contexts" meant. This made me re-think the wording and level of questions, and we had an email exchange as preparation.

My background before starting this research included some relevant experience as a secondary teacher and trainer, and as a researcher in educational settings. I was therefore confident that I could establish some degree of human rapport which would be important for the chosen method of understanding the interviewees' perspectives. My preference for interviewing style has been to show a high degree of interest and make the questions sound empathetic rather than mechanistic. Although I had not taken a deliberate feminist stance in interviewing, I was interested in Oakley's interviews on motherhood (Oakley 1999) where respondents wanted to know about her views and experiences as well as provide answers. Similarly, I decided as courtesy to give some brief background and reasons for my interest in ASTs. I found that when the interview was officially over or when the tape recorder turned off, there continued to be a rapport and dialogue, and sometimes important facts were disclosed. This

might fit with Spradley's (1980) account of rapport as a four-stage process of interviews leading from *exploration to co-operation and participation*.

Sometimes respondents raised very significant points at the end of the interview, almost in chat rather than interview question-and-answer mode. This may indicate something about the depth of reflection and time needed to reflect or "warm to" the interviewer. For example, an off-the-record comment was made about outreach being blocked.

I have reflected on the differences between conducting and analysing the LEA and DfES interviews compared to the AST interviews, and also on my role as a researcher in each situation. The LEA and DfES interviews were face-to-face and conducted towards the start of the research. I felt more nervous at this stage, and despite the pre-planned prompts found it more difficult to control the direction of the interview, perhaps due to my reaction with respondents I considered senior. There were technical problems – tape recording in noisy offices made the note taking all the more important. In contrast, all the AST interviews except one were conducted by telephone or taped, and seemed easier to focus. The interviews were thirty to forty-five minutes long. Although my aim was to record and transcribe all interviews, this was not always possible. The face-to-face interviews were more difficult, and in some cases impossible, for a third party to transcribe. This suggests that something about the face-to-face interviews, perhaps on a non-verbal level, altered the length and direction of responses. Over the research period, I became more comfortable with respondents steering away from planned questions as I gained more confidence with the subject matter and felt that I had heard some of it before. Also significant is that over the telephone, any social differences which might have arisen through seniority, status, or race might be less obvious. Feminist analysts seek to address and overcome biases typical of the social world which may be reflected in interviewing. I did not think this approach was possible, and I remained an outsider rather than an action researcher.

Questionnaires

The rationale for designing questionnaires before conducting interviews was as a filtering and access tool. For example, there was no point in interviewing ASTs with limited or no experience of outreach or Primary ASTs. Before developing detailed AST interview questions, I used questionnaires as part of the internal triangulation of information within the case study. I opted for the *in-situ* administration at AST conferences in Hillshire and Rivershire at conferences B, C and D rather than distribution via direct mail or email, because I hoped that my presence would clarify queries and provide a higher response rate than in postal questionnaires (Open University 2001, p. 175). I was also observing at these events and made my role as a researcher known. I justify the use of such mixed methods, questionnaire and observation, as a means to deepen understanding and validity and as a selection filtering method to gain access to potential interview respondents and further narrow the sample.

The research instruments are in Appendix B. I used both closed and open questions in 2004 at the start of the research to obtain different types of information. According to Cohen et al. (2000), qualitative open-ended questions are appropriate for showing specificity in a small sample. It can be difficult to make comparisons between open-ended questions, yet they are seen to provide hallmark gems which provide “*authenticity, honesty, candour.*”

I analyzed the responses to the 2004 questionnaire by question type and frequency of response. This helped me focus on which questions to follow up in detailed interview. For example, I found that issues of autonomy and time were important in both sources of data. Analysing the closed and quantitative responses also helped me see some categories of data to put aside, either because the response was clear or because it was secondary to the main research questions. For example, the split response to whether ASTs should be part of the SMT seemed to confirm other data provided at the DfES interview in January 2004. Although I did not focus on this in interview I came back to this issue when the draft standards were issued in

April 2006 and ASTs being part of the management team was seen to be a likely policy direction.

After an extended period of data collection and on-going analysis, in 2006 I used a Likeart scale questionnaire and closed agree/disagree statements to confirm findings (see Appendix B).

However, I found that even *in-situ* distribution had its problems, especially as I needed not only responses but additional contacts for follow-up interviews. I had learned that finding respondents from cold was not easy. At conference A the focus was on observation, but I asked at the end of a group session for anyone who wanted to be interviewed to leave their email or phone number. From six names left, this led to only one telephone interview which I regarded as a pilot. This was a disappointing response which may have been because the approach was too low-profile or because I had no sponsor or introduction.

By conferences B, C and D, I had changed my participation style from neutral tennis umpire in the corner to interested and assertive guest at the front. I had negotiated access via the local authority organisers. I asked for a brief, “promotional” slot in the plenary to explain why I needed help, and that I valued the opinions of the audience. I had put a questionnaire on every chair or in every pack and I took the opportunity to explain that the findings would be anonymous. Even so, I was disappointed with a response rate of only 46, and because my own focus was on Secondary ASTs I had not anticipated getting primary teacher responses, and needed to separate them out in my analysis.

It would have been better to have had a full pilot of the questionnaire and thus picked up some ambiguity of questions. For example, I included specialist schools as a category (meaning a designated curriculum specialism such as sports or science), but I forgot to include special schools (for children with special needs), and some respondents wrote this in. This might have been a happy accident, as outreach in special schools turned out to be a form of crossing the borders I had not anticipated but one which I later observed at an outreach visit and in interview data.

I acknowledge some limitations of data collected in this way: participation in the conferences did not represent all possible ASTs in the local authority, and ASTs might have been in danger of conforming to group norms of letting off steam away from school, but I could not follow up all of their contexts to triangulate this. On balance, the observation opportunities at conference provided ample data on outreach issues. The on-going and iterative analysis helped develop the next stage of data collection. I found the questionnaires useful in combination with the other methods. They did serve their purpose as a source to help me select respondents for detailed interview. Each respondent was given a code to indicate the local authority location of respondents, and whether secondary/primary. I would not have been able to obtain a “thick description” with questionnaire methods alone.

Data Analysis

Most of the data was in written form, consisting of interview transcripts and field notes from observations. I also added to the analysis the importance of a non-verbal sense of atmosphere, rapport and inference. Most of these non-verbal cues were live and immediate, for example the enthusiasm seen in conferences and visits. Also in listening again and again to tapes of telephone interviews, it was important to consider not only spoken words as text, but also unspoken words, including silences and tone of voice, as part of “*authenticity*.” For example, the degrees of hesitancy conveyed by Belinda and Irene matched their more negative view of their outreach experiences.

I first considered transcripts in their entirety and made marginal notes as primary analysis. The methods of qualitative analysis are usually coding, categorizing and grouping, eventually leading to theorizing according to grounded theory. Although software packages can assist in part of the analysis, my approach was to develop categories and data groups by hand through an on-going analysis. I found this a long process but also a creative one. As I was also a part-time researcher, and a junior one, I noted that some experienced researchers I met seemed to have internalized and fast-

forwarded the data analysis process. It reminded me of the difference between a trainee teacher and an experienced teacher undertaking lesson planning.

The data was analysed first by looking down the notes or transcript of a single interview/session and then by looking across interviews. I was aware of the subjectivity of this process. I compared the data in terms of differences and opposites and looked for common elements and dissonances. For example:

- 1 Positive/negative interpretation of outreach
- 2 Outreach with teacher/pupil/department
- 3 Solo outreach/group outreach/no outreach at all
- 4 School-directed/LEA-directed/AST network
- 5 Primary school outreach/secondary school outreach
- 6 Sustained work/one-off intervention
- 7 Mentoring and coaching/technical training and demonstration

To demonstrate how the data were analyzed, see Appendix D for a detailed example of initial analysis. To illustrate how I moved from my own *researcher categories* and compared this with literature categories, see Table 3.4 below. Although I borrowed from the literature, they were not *pre-specified categories* (Open University 2001).

Table 3.4 Examples of development of data categories

Initial researcher category	Opposite category	Literature concept
Levelling / mateyness	Spying/Superteacher	Collegiality/contrived collegiality (Hargreaves)
Pro-active advertising of services	Passive approach/ waiting for outreach from LEA or school	Entrepreneurial teacher (Fielding) Teacher leader Teacher agency Privatisation
Nice school/positive classroom behaviour for learning/comfort zone	Failing school/zoo/war zone/culture shock	Social hierarchy Cultural capital SES Uneducability of pupils
Box of tricks/loan or gift of teaching resources		Reification
Negotiating outreach	Imposed outreach	Ownership in CPD “Joint practice enterprise” (Fielding et al.)
Knowing Fred for years/trust established/levelling	New contact/need to build trust/not spying	Trust Informal networks Social capital

The timing of the data collection ran later than scheduled, but I undertook interim analysis after every event. Wellington (2000, p. 132 in Cohen et al. 2000) reports a research problem of over-collecting data but under-analysing it, due to running out of energy or time. I found the delay helpful for a live and current topic. Also, coming back to the analysis with a fresh perspective helped me “saturate” the data categories. During the delay, other literature had been published and my other projects provided an even stronger sense of the same things being said in different parts of the country as triangulation.

Gaining access as a researcher

Gaining access to respondents and agreeing permission took some persistence, but I was careful to be transparent about the purposes of the research. For example, before proceeding with a second interview with the Rivershire LEA officer I gave him a set of notes from our previous meeting for comment on the spot, and then asked the same questions. All the ASTs were sent an email or introductory letter about the research and a thank-you letter.

The fact that I was already a part-time contract researcher and working at the Open University may have made it easier to gain access for interviews. I was surprised at how straightforward it was to gain access to the DfES informant. I was surprised at how generous ASTs were with their time, and how open about their experiences. I was pleased that I was able to approach ASTs directly through contacts made at conferences and through LEA recommendations rather than via head teacher selection. In AST interviews this added to the sense of confidentiality, as the AST was under no impression that I might report back to the head teacher.

I always made it clear that this work was for my own doctorate and not part of any other study. I always made it clear that I was observing in order to understand the role, and that that I was not an AST but a researcher. I was at times slightly uncomfortable that the process was one-way. I anticipated that participants might ask “What’s in it for me?” The best answer I could have given is that reflecting on their work might be a helpful or interesting experience.

I was aware on two occasions when my presence may have set up an expectation that my research would bring about some change. Early on, when observing a discussion group at the first conference, one participant looked my way and said with some tone of bitterness, *“Head teachers need to know more about what we are doing ...Open University please take note...”* Later, at a regional conference I was introduced by the LEA officer who voiced the opinion that research was needed in order to give recognition to the AST scheme and put the record straight about their

experiences. Over lunch I came face-to-face with some of the people I had interviewed on the telephone and found people smiling at me, even though I could only recognise them by their names and not their faces. Somebody asked me what I was going to do with the research. I said I thought there would be merit in a Teachers' TV programme but explained the issue of anonymity.

Gaining access for observation as shadowing was more complex than gaining access for interview. I judged that observing interactions between teachers talking about teaching might be seen as threatening or intrusive, and therefore had to be approached very sensitively with due regard to confidentiality. I was interested in understanding how differences in teaching styles and ages might affect how relationships were negotiated, but had limited direct observation. Instead I had to examine this indirectly through AST accounts.

Selecting a sample and negotiating access took time, but I was pleased that I had learned how to do this as a solo researcher. This is in contrast with my paid work as a researcher where the sites were chosen in consultation with the DfES before I arrived, and my job there was maintenance of the relationship.

Contrast with paid work as a researcher

Writing a doctorate has allowed me to develop as a researcher in my own time and on my own terms. This was not, however, the only research I was doing. At the same time as the doctorate in my own time, I was also a paid part-time researcher. I acknowledge some conceptual overlap between projects, even though I have kept the data separate and developed my own analysis of different research problems. Such a combination of experiences running parallel has contributed to my professional development interests and career orientation. I have found it helpful to reflect on the differences in research contexts and methodologies and to compare my experiences.

The key differences between the paid research projects and my doctorate are with the scale, time frame, sponsorship, resources, and, of course, the research questions and methodologies. For example, the research projects sponsored by an external agency come with a contract. Would the researchers be allowed to publish bad news? In contrast, as an independent doctorate student I could potentially have uncovered unwelcome news for stakeholders, and would have to weigh up how to deal with this. I am aware of the BERA ethical guidelines, and I am not setting out to bring harm to the AST respondents.

I have been surprised to find a stronger sense of ownership and creative and emotional commitment to the doctorate work. This may be because working in a team with experienced colleagues of divergent interests requires more compromise over what to include and exclude, and the standardisation of research instruments to be used by different researchers in different parts of the country.

Consideration of alternative methodologies and potential follow-up studies

At the end of the research I was in a good position to reflect on how I would do the research differently, and how I would develop potential follow-up studies.

At the design stage, I first rejected action research as a methodology for this study, although it appealed to my own value system, because this was the method that started my own career shift from teacher to teacher-researcher. A history of action research is provided by Cohen et al. (2000), who distinguish between the manuals of action research and theoretical issues. A key feature of action research is that it is expected to bring about some change, and involves practitioners as the subjects rather than the objects of research in framing their own problems through democratic participation and flexible methodology. It thus implies a degree of empowerment of collaboration and problem solving. The origins of action research can be traced to Kurt Lewin's work with disadvantaged groups and to Stenhouse

(1975). It is also linked to the view of the teacher as researcher. This idea of the AST as researcher is revisited in the conclusion, although it goes beyond the data.

The action research method was unsuitable because before starting, I did not know which AST problems should be researched. I am based in a university and would have had to set up a partnership for action research. In my own small-scale research project, with no budget or other resources other than myself, I did not expect to bring about change, and I intended to write for an academic audience at this point in my career. I also wanted to keep some distance from situations of role dilemma.

However, in Hillshire I observed some interest from ASTs in following up action research, and began to think about this as a potential follow-up project. For example, the AST respondents in interview often had a speciality that they could present to other schools, but this was seen in terms of a training opportunity or selling point. Instead, the ASTs' interests could be developed as teacher research opportunities within an area, as in the example of the Hillshire science group observed in chapter 6.

One benefit of follow-up would be to engage in a longer-term research relationship with respondents. Some of these topics might relate to teaching and learning issues and be subject-specific, for example comparison of methods of engaging boys in writing by separate-sex teaching groups, or more generic, such as use of intranets and motivation to complete homework. Or the action research could be about the AST role itself, such as the costs and time models of working in outreach. In action research, the problem to be researched should come from the participants, not be imposed by the researcher.

A central dilemma throughout has been the balance between breadth versus depth of research questions and associated sampling methods. For example, I found that non-participant observation of ASTs at work (on outreach and in conference groups) was an especially rich source of data which helped me reach "saturation point" in seeing several categories come together. I would have liked further shadowing of a small number of ASTs on outreach in order to verify their accounts of outreach, especially with regard to

collegiality and adjustments to context. The advantage of starting with a large pool of ASTs was that it helped generate further contacts via attending conferences. However, this method meant that it took some time to get permission to access an outreach visit and school. Alternatively, a quicker method might have been to take a smaller number of ASTs using a convenience sample to start AST observation of outreach, and this might have given more in-depth opportunities at one site to understand the contrast between inreach and outreach communities, and to understand developments in mentoring relationships.

Another alternative method would have been to take a quantitative approach to patterns and issues of outreach. Glaser and Strauss (1968) contrast theoretical sampling with statistical sampling:

“Theoretical sampling is done in order to discover categories and their properties and to suggest the interrelationships into a theory. Statistical sampling is done to obtain accurate evidence on distributions of people among categories to be used in descriptions or verifications.”

(Glaser and Strauss 1968, pp. 62-63)

Thus if I had chosen to follow a statistical study, the sample of ASTs would have been random, and I would have looked to prove the generalities of hypotheses and would have held to a pre-planned research design. For example, by taking a larger sample of ASTs I could have looked for distribution of ASTs according to variables such as gender, age, salary, subject, type of home school and type of outreach school. One hypothesis which emerged from my grounded sample was that ASTs based in schools in challenging circumstances measures obtain less outreach in secondary schools of high status. One way of verifying this might have been via quantitative methods. I acknowledge that such verification data is missing from my study. I was surprised to find that access to quantitative data on ASTs was not straightforward. I made some initial enquiries with DfES and SSAT trust about whether they held data on the type of school where ASTs were based, and learned that this data was not kept. Therefore the only way of analyzing distribution of AST by school would have been via the local authority or the body responsible for assessments. I also found that data on the number of ASTs per subject was collected by the DfES via census per

subject, but only published as part of the pay and review body data. Without special access permission, this would have made it difficult to compare trends in applications for AST posts.

As a comparison with a survey of a random population of ASTs, I note that Taylor and Jennings (2004) had a large survey of nearly 1000 ASTs from a potential national sample of 3500. This was useful when read as a report verifying the issues of the AST role and outreach as a problem. However, the report did not provide sufficiently rich detail on context for my purposes. Quantitative methods alone would not have answered the same questions or generated explanations for the challenges of outreach.

An alternative method of data collection could have been observation and participation on the national electronic discussion forum for ASTs. I had hoped to gain access to this national e-conference to observe the traffic and gain a national perspective of ASTs from all over England. However, this turned out to be an inactive conference and would not have yielded much data. I made requests to both the DfES, who were running the conference in 2004, and then the NCSL, who took over the conference management in 2005, but with no response. In my own data sample I found only two ASTs who had accessed the conference, only to find it deserted, as discussed in Chapter 6.

By contrast, I found the face-to-face observation of conferences, and especially of an outreach session, to yield very rich data. I reflected on how different this study might look if I had started with an observation of ASTs on outreach rather than learning about outreach at several stages removed. I have not chosen a convenience sample amongst friends or existing contacts, but I can see this would have been quicker.

I am aware of missing perspectives in this study, and an alternative might have included perspectives of other teachers and pupils.

Minimising bias

Qualitative research is about subjective realities, and there may be a problem about standing back from multiple perspectives. It is important that this study has rigour in methodology and that the methods are transparent. It is also important that the findings represent my interpretation of truth, bearing in mind that the terms ‘validity’ and ‘reliability’ may be associated with a positivist tradition. Bassey (1999) associates these terms with surveys and experiments, but not case-study research, where trustworthiness is more appropriate for the ethic of truth (p. 75).

I have been through an iterative process of going back to the literature and data to develop emerging findings. This helped me look for contrasting explanations as well as consistency or dissonance across the data categories. My claim to validity or minimising bias in this case study is triangulation across individual AST experiences and data from a range of several contexts.

For example, the data collection process started with a funnelling down from a broad overview (DfES, Local Authority) and questionnaire to detail (data on individual AST cases, observations in context). Some responses, especially on “time”, soon became saturated due to frequency of response. Other categories, such as “creativity”, took longer to confirm. Both LEA officers and the DfES officer described a combination of grassroots credibility and creative enthusiasm as the key to the ASTs’ popularity. I could see this for myself in interviews and the interaction with outreach teachers. Another unexpected example which emerged in interview was the AST perception that outreach was impacting their own professional development. In the final survey I was able to check if this perception was relevant to other non-interviewed ASTs. In response to “*In outreach I gain as much as I give*”, 100% of responses were in agreement, indicating that this was not a one-off.

The question of the right number of groups for sampling cannot be determined in advance, according to Glaser and Strauss (1968), in relation to the generation of theory and theoretical saturation.

“Saturation means that no additional data are being found whereby the sociologist can develop properties of a category. As he sees similar instances over and over again the researcher becomes empirically confident that a category is saturated. He goes out of his way to look for groups that stretch diversity of data as far as possible...” (Glaser and Strauss 1968, p. 61)

According to this theory, the search for verification is limiting, as it may ignore data which disproves a theory instead of considering it as another slice of data or category.

There is also debate about the extent of generalisability from case study, as opposed to scientific certainty. For Bassey (1999), fuzzy generalisation is similar to a sound-bite in providing a succinct way to contribute to professional discourse. By adding the word ‘may’ to statements, it allows for the many variables and importance of context and circumstance (p. 51).

Ethics

Part of developing as a researcher involves applying professional codes of ethics including British Education Research Association guidelines and making individual on-the-spot decisions. Key underlying principles are not to bring about harm to participants through the research, and to respect privacy.

Since participation in research is expected to be voluntary, I looked for ethical ways to involve ASTs by conducting open rather than secret research. Some researchers provide full written information about the research and assurances of privacy, anonymity and confidentiality within a formal document where participants are asked to provide a signature of informed consent. I did not ask for a signature, but did send a brief letter of

introduction to interviewees. I aimed not to keep contacting them after a few attempts.

Neuman (2000) points out that researchers may be in a position of power, and that respondents might be obliged to gatekeepers, such as in the case of students, prisoners, soldiers or employees.

“ Gatekeepers or those in positions of authority may restrict access unless they receive information on subjects... ”

(Neuman, 2000 p. 100).

I was therefore careful to separate out gatekeepers such as local authority and DfES officers from individual ASTs, and I deliberately approached ASTs directly, not via headteachers. This is one reason the questionnaire was administered before the interviews. I did ask local authority stakeholders for some contacts, but did not report back to them or identify respondents.

Another example of an ethical issue I faced was to do with not coercing participants by drawing clear lines between different research projects which I was involved with simultaneously. As a paid researcher in the *Diversity Pathfinders* project, local authorities were obliged to co-operate with the evaluation team in recommending schools as field sites. In my own study of ASTs, local authorities and ASTs were not at all obliged to take part and would receive no direct benefit. The *Diversity Pathfinders* project sites were potentially very fruitful for a study of ASTs, particularly around collaborative use of ASTs in a cluster-type arrangement. On the advice of colleagues I decided it would have been unethical to also use data from the *Diversity Pathfinders* project towards my own research. Such dual use might have caused interference in the project with informed consent and original analysis. I was therefore left with the need to find new and untouched research sites and present myself as an independent doctorate researcher.

I aimed to follow ethical guidelines in assuring ASTs and other stakeholders of anonymity. I only taped interviews, including telephone interviews, with permission, and always offered to follow up or provide more detail. I explained that the research was not about judging individual performance or

reporting their work, but understanding what ASTs do. Since I had very little time to develop relationships in the field it was not appropriate to ask to observe a situation of an AST meeting a teacher deemed to be underperforming; instead, I asked for reports of such work.

I analysed unexpected findings reported by ASTs within the local market inter-school context without passing judgement on individuals. These pressures on schools from the data included the recruitment of an AST on outreach to the outreach school, and the importance of working with feeder primary schools rather than secondary schools.

Chapter 4

What is outreach?

Chapter Overview

This chapter reports findings on the nature of the AST role in outreach, with a focus on how ASTs perceive the benefits and challenges, and a discussion of the implications. The role of the local authority in arranging and evaluating outreach is also considered here. The findings in this chapter provide further local perspectives on why ASTs were introduced. A vignette illustrates an outreach visit where the AST has a high degree of autonomy.

Research context

I start my account at the end of the research period. As part of my effort to understand the world of ASTs I had invited myself along to annual conferences for ASTs in the local authorities of Hillshire and Rivershire in 2004. It turned out to be such a valuable data collection opportunity that I went back again in 2006 to the Hillshire annual AST conference because I wanted to confirm my emerging findings two years on.

I enjoyed being a non-participant observer. The mood was high because this was a professional development treat laid on by the Local Authority, with lunch in a hotel and a programme of external speakers and lively workshop sessions led by ASTs. There was plenty of good-natured banter, networking and resource swapping. The 2006 session was the last opportunity for me to finish the data collection, and it was only then that I realized exactly why I had found it so stimulating to track this group of ASTs.

What I saw and heard was like a staff room from a dream, where teachers had time to talk and enthuse about teaching, to provide each other with ideas, and to reflect with candour. I felt as if I had stumbled across the “*learning community*” (Wenger 1998) so often quoted in the academic literature, and it was full of enthusiastic “*practitioner champions*”

(Hargreaves, D.H. 2003, p50) busy in informal collaborative networking as “*reflective practitioners*” (Schön 1987) exchanging tales of risk-taking and coaching. Although nobody mentioned the policy mantra of “sharing good practice”, I wondered if this is what it was meant to look like. Methodology textbooks warn researchers against becoming too close and “going native.” Yet, at this final fieldwork site, I had to admit that if I were still a teacher instead of working in a university as I do now, I would quite like to be an AST because of the passion I saw.

But the sum total of my data shows that the reality of AST work is not always like this futuristic vision. I noted a need for caution in not assuming that a group of enthusiastic practitioners equates to a learning community, as explored more fully in chapter 6.

The research had set out to explore AST outreach. This is not something teachers have had to attempt before. Since outreach support was taking place away from the home school, it would be invisible to and possibly undervalued by home school colleagues, according to early data: “*There you go swanning off again*” was described as a typical reaction by colleagues to Homer’s outreach. Early reports saw outreach as problematic, but I wanted to investigate the AST perceptions and see this in a local context.

The Local Authority context

Within this case study of groups of ASTs, I use two local authorities to indicate the geographical and administrative border for ASTs as explained in the methodology chapter. My findings acknowledge the importance of the local authority context, but overall this was not the most important local factor impacting on AST outreach, as discussed in later chapters.

In particular, the local authority role in funding, supporting and coordinating AST posts is noted. Ofsted (2001) was quick to point out when local authority coordination was lacking, and even later, Taylor & Jennings (2004) saw outreach coordination as inconsistent.

At the end of the pilot phase, Sutton et al. (2000) point out the complexities:

“this is quite a different phase which requires the co-operation of LEAs to match government funding. Under pressure to delegate more of their budgets to schools, having to make difficult decisions on competing priorities for school improvement and faced with significant opposition from schools, it will not be surprising if the support for the extension of ASTs in the National Phase is tentative.”

(Sutton et al. 2000, p. 425)

This research ends at another phase for ASTs. Goodwyn and Fidler (2003) indicate an early mixed response of local authorities to taking up the scheme. They also find that most ASTs were LEA-funded, which is still the norm. I was involved in other research interviewing 15 other local authorities on AST policies, and noted that in one large local authority there had been radical re-organization, with ASTs replacing an entire tier of former link advisors. In contrast, some of the smaller local authorities in England found it difficult to organize AST subject group meetings (Bennett et al. 2006).

Hillshire and Rivershire have been long-standing supporters of the AST scheme, and have had time to develop their AST strategy. Hillshire and Rivershire are comparable in size, with a large group of 75 ASTs in each local authority. Organizing outreach is one of the major duties. From coordinator interviews and internal documents, I found that the other roles were given as:

- Administration of government funding for AST salaries
- Liaison with schools on recruitments
- Procedures for ASTs, including monitoring evaluation data
- Strategic coordination of outreach places
- Integration of AST work with other national policies and local priorities
- Arranging AST meetings and other professional development events

I interviewed the coordinators at their offices, and documents were collected on policies, salaries, evaluations and procedures. At the first stage, the interviews provided an overview of the AST role, and also the opportunity to gain access to further contacts, especially conferences and names of schools for head teacher interviews.

In Hillshire, I conducted a total of two stakeholder interviews, one with the LEA officer with deployment and strategic responsibilities and one with the consultant with responsibility for induction, training and professional development of the ASTs. I also had informal contact with the administrator dealing with requests for outreach and applications as I sought access to the AST conferences. According to the DfES, this local authority had exemplary protocols and evaluation systems.

In Rivershire, I conducted two interviews with the LEA officer, who was also the school improvement officer. The authority was proud of its long-standing support of ASTs, where one of the first-ever ASTs had received a national award.

I found that ASTs sometimes worked alongside local authority advisors, but saw their role as different. A key finding was that there were concerns over AST funding. In both local authorities and in some AST and head teacher data, there was a degree of concern about the potential threat to outreach and even to the continuity of the role, due to planned changes to central funding arrangements for ASTs. In future, it was likely that funding for ASTs would go straight to schools or be found from other LEA funds. This struggle for funding might be seen as part of the cycle of reform (Fullan 2001; Hargreaves 1994).

Other findings from local authority data were grouped into: evaluating AST outreach; deploying ASTs in schools in special measures; and coordinating AST group work. Each of these is considered in this chapter.

Local authority evaluation of outreach

The questions “*What is outreach?*” and “*Why were ASTs introduced?*” also related to the local authority perspective on ASTs as seen through interviews and evaluation data on ASTs. This reflected the newness of the role as well as an old problem of measuring the impact of a professional development and separating this from the benefits of the process. (Cordingley et al 2005; Day 1999) I started to understand the particular problem of trying to measure and evaluate AST outreach. One local authority officer acknowledged that a system was in place, but from his point of view collecting data was a constant administrative problem that was compounded by uncertainty in future funding for ASTs. He explained this in terms of ASTs being creative types rather than form-filling types:

“The evaluations demonstrate work of a very high level but there are too many gaps in the data to make irrefutable statements about the value of the scheme.” (source: Hillshire internal document, collected at LEA officer interview 2004)

Similarly, the Rivershire officer said that collecting data on how effectively ASTs had spent their time was compulsory because central resources were involved.

In contrast, the only mention of costs from the AST respondents was that they wished the schools knew they were offering a free service. Many ASTs claimed the schools were often too busy to complete evaluation forms. Two in Rivershire had made their own forms and had made a link between evaluations of the work in order to improve it. The problem of ownership of evaluation might have been a reason for the reluctance, or it might have been seen as a minor part of the teacher’s role. This difficulty is predictable, given the tension between the local authority’s need to collect suitable quality assurance data for their central accountability, and the ASTs’ own perception of their autonomy in the role. In the case of AST outreach, this might be the first experience of being accountable to someone outside their school.

ASTs gave examples of the LEA evaluation forms, and some also saw

indicators of success in improved GCSE results. How to isolate the AST intervention amongst other variables is a methodological problem. It also relates to the issue of how to transfer good practice (Fielding et al. 2005).

The most extreme dislike of LEA evaluation came from Homer, who in a very dismissive tone condemned the request to *"quantify my outputs"*. In his view, as an experienced English AST who had been working on building up the morale and resources in a neighbouring school, such an inappropriate measure was an insult to his professionalism.

Such differences in interests as exemplified by the evaluation of AST outreach echo a point made by Connelly and James (2006) in their distinction between the interests of different actors in collaboration for school improvement. One distinction is between collaboration as a gain in resources and collaboration that *"enhances legitimacy in the professional role."* This may be related to my findings that ASTs experienced a sense of renewed enthusiasm for teaching through supporting other teachers, and through the interpersonal domain.

I examined some of the evaluation forms from Hillshire in 2005, which provided qualitative data on the AST intervention. I was interested in these to analyze how the schools appreciated the support: *"AST was full of practical suggestions. Lots of common-sense ideas and full of relevant information, unlike other areas of education"* (source: Hillshire internal document collected at interview, 2004). This links with the observation of Clive, who appeared to be full of relevant practical help and resources.

Another comment showed that the AST was not just working on a one-to-one basis:

"Practical, direct, based on experience and proven expertise. Professional dialogue, engaging with the problems and particular difficulties in a way which had a wide impact on the science department. Very interesting and fruitful. I shall be seeking ways to continue and extend this work and to maintain regular contact with AST." (source: Hillshire internal document collected at interview, 2004)

Other comments show the AST filling a gap in service formerly provided by the local authority:

“AST was very supportive and with no advisory service I felt I had someone to bounce ideas off. Supported the idea of sharing good practice.” (source: Hillshire internal document collected at interview, 2004)

The evaluation comments were presented to me via the local authority documents, and did not contain any negative comments (although they might have been filtered out). However, one comment did point out the limits of the AST working alone in trying to treat the symptoms rather than the cause:

“He did his best, but our ‘problems’ are not within his remit to solve! (class size, pupil demotivation). AST was very approachable, sincere, conscientious, etc.”(source: Hillshire internal document collected at interview, 2004)

The DfES guidelines suggested that the AST should *“keep copies of evaluations to build up a portfolio for evidence for performance management purposes.”* (Appendix A: DfES, Frequently asked questions, September 2004, p. 9)

Both local authorities recognized that the evaluation of AST work also needed to be underpinned by appropriate support, professional development and induction. I noted some minor differences in how Hillshire and Rivershire organized AST support. Hillshire had one local authority officer to organize the funding, recruitment and evaluation of ASTs, and in addition had a separate officer, a part-time consultant and former advisor, to organize the training, meetings and support. In Rivershire, both functions were carried out by one officer. Rivershire was working with other neighbouring authorities to provide joint professional development at annual conferences with outside speakers. The ASTs found this helpful.

Range of outreach work

I found that outreach was generally seen as a benefit of the job by those ASTs who had significant experience of outreach. I was surprised at the wide range of activity counting as outreach, which came in many different forms.

I followed advice on interviewing and questionnaire design in starting with factual and soft questions as warm-up. However, even just asking what ASTs do in outreach turned into a long list representing a wide range of activity. In a few cases, some reasons why outreach was not happening as intended were also given, e.g. because of blocking by a head teacher or reported cases of new ASTs not knowing where to start in finding outreach. Even the same respondent reported a variety of different work counting as outreach. All of the work was broadly supporting other teachers, but looking across all my data, some activities were close to a classroom teacher's functions, and some ASTs were extending the role to mentor, advisory teacher or critical friend.

Outreach activities directly related to teaching

Planning schemes of work and developing materials: helping a non-specialist with a new syllabus, supporting Primary Science, providing enrichment teaching ideas, developing a resource bank for GCSE and A Level.

Intensive pupil tuition: taking exam pupils out of lessons for extra course work before an exam, especially those on the D/C grade borderline. This included an example of working across local authority borders in an authority in special measures.

Lesson demonstration/observation: including inviting an someone from another school in to observe the AST's class, or observing at an outreach school by request, or specific AST responsibilities for Initial Teacher Training at a designated teacher training school.

Outreach teacher support activities

Individual Mentoring: this included activities where the prime purpose was seen as teacher confidence or morale boosting, for example by a Secondary Science specialist to a non-specialist at Primary school; for a new head of department; emergency cover in a neighbouring school for an exam class to avoid supply teachers; or finding out ways to support weak teachers before official disciplinary or competency procedures. This last example was seen as especially sensitive, and there were clear guidelines that ASTs would not get involved in disciplinary measures.

Advisory work to a whole department: e.g. use of pupil interviews to feed back perceptions of a department, or links across departments through specialist school networks.

Support to school in serious weaknesses, special measures or challenging circumstances: examples of this are found throughout the data, and the implications are discussed in chapter 5. Outside this study, examples included teams of ASTs being sent to schools (Bennett et al. 2006, forthcoming). In the pilot interview and outside Hillside and Rivershire, I came across examples of AST work to support overseas teachers in areas with recruitment problems.

Outreach training activities

Generic staff development: how to differentiate materials, behaviour management, or ICT-related development, such as demonstrating use of the interactive whiteboard in a primary school by a Secondary Science specialist. Most examples were held at the sites of outreach schools, but there were also examples of running staff development at local teachers' centres. Many ASTs seemed to have developed a niche, and some sought to develop one.

Subject specialist input: training overseas teachers in UK curricula (Homer), transferring knowledge of a Science curriculum to non-specialists.

Outreach networking and action research

Taking part in group projects within a local authority: a group of ASTs organizing termly meetings for all science teachers with visiting speakers etc., pilot project to evaluate software. The Hillshire Science ASTs had a strong group identity, as described in chapter 6. Outside this study, some groups of ASTs were managed by a local school cluster instead of a local authority, and were doing 100% outreach (Woods et al. 2006).

Outreach for external relations

Ambassador to represent the school at conferences and special events: this example is discussed in chapter 6 in relation to the Specialist School and Academies Trust.

I return to the implication of this early finding on multiple activities in later chapters. The variety of outreach activities made it more difficult to make comparisons between ASTs, or to understand if there was anything typical about outreach. Taylor and Jennings' (2004) survey reported, "*...the eclectic mix of outreach activities has emerged rather than been designed.*" I compared my data on outreach with the DfES list and local authority internal documents. Additional key outreach activities were:

- Targeted support to schools experiencing difficulties (support for the local authority's development plan to help raise standards in schools)
- Making a video of model lessons (described by one AST as inreach)
- Identifying educational research to enhance existing practice (comment by the local authority advisor that ASTs did not have time to read)
- Matching teaching approaches to pupil learning styles (this was the subject of a conference observed in Rivershire)
- Acting as a consultant to a team developing strategies for pupils experiencing difficulties
- Co-ordinating the assessment and analysis for targeting underachievement and reducing disaffection

I compared this with examples of outreach considered inappropriate in the Hillshire protocols guide:

*“ASTs should **not** be asked to:*

Provide references for staff they are working with.

Act as a supply teacher by either covering for absences or by taking repeated ‘demonstration lessons’.

Take part in activities designed as part of either performance management of a teacher or as part of capability procedures.”

These official guidelines did not always match the accounts of outreach in my data from Rivershire or Hillshire, and this tension was part of the challenge.

Ofsted (2001) was clear that the outreach role should be supporting teachers directly. The report saw the activity of supporting pupils as a departure from official policy:

“where no other teachers are present, which is usually the case, there is a missed opportunity for sharing practice with other teachers” (Ofsted 2001, p. 6, item 12.)

This is echoed in Belinda’s doubts about the value of her contribution. According to Ofsted, one inter-school cluster group had been preoccupied with reorganization and had not sought AST work, even though the AST had set aside time for attending meetings (Ofsted 2001, p. 6, item 15). This suggested that just calling an activity collaborative was not enough without looking at the nature of the actual work, and is similar to Hargreaves’ (1994) critique of contrived collegiality.

A key finding was that *“supporting other teachers”* in outreach was not just about coaching or mentoring or an expert-novice type relationship. From the accounts, I learned that it was also about running training sessions, bringing ideas back to the home school, and actively seeking new outreach work. At conference observations I also learned that outreach involved group work with other ASTs and leading specific projects, as described in chapter 6. This led me to a working early theory of outreach in terms of solo, group

and deficit models, but I later revised this because I considered it too simplistic. From the observation of Clive I also learned that what ASTs do in outreach may be more than can be captured in an evaluation form, because the relationships and personal support are seen as important.

In one very early preconception of a research design, I envisaged repeated observation or work shadowing of a small number of ASTs. I imagined mentor-type sessions with other teachers, and considered an AST reflective journal for me to analyze. I soon revised this methodology as too limiting and inappropriate, as it might imply an obligation for researcher involvement, as in action research. Instead, I needed a wide AST sample to understand the range of outreach, and as an external researcher I needed time to build up trust and rapport before observation. As part of understanding outreach, I wanted to see it as well as hear it reported in interviews, but this took some time to arrange. The observation of an outreach session is reported here in the format of a case-study vignette. The key points emerging from the observation are part of the general discussion of findings at the end of this chapter.

Vignette: solo AST outreach

In the selection of participants, I looked for ASTs with considerable experience in a range of outreach contexts. After re-examining the data outreach from the telephone interviews, I approached two ASTs from Hillshire who seemed highly reflective and experienced, to ask if I could do more detailed observation of their outreach. Given the sensitivities that would be involved in observing a teacher in difficulty, where an external researcher might be an intrusion, I left the choice of observation up to them. The observation session with Belinda did not work in the available time. This would have been interesting, because Belinda had some negative views of the role as well as a lot of experience. I followed up Clive, whose account of supporting a department through the use of pupil feedback stood out in the data set. He was happy to help, and suggested I observe on a visit to a

teacher needing Science Specialist input, and checked permission from the teacher he was visiting.

The teacher was based in a small special school for secondary pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties in a rural setting. She was expected to teach more than one subject in this context. As a teacher trained in Drama, she needed to know the best ways to deliver the science curriculum in her context. He had already been visiting her for over a year, and his input was based on not only his experience as a mainstream teacher, but also on his own background of, and earlier teaching in, a special school. He thus offered a unique combination of skills, and I was aware that this observation might not be typical outreach.

Until this observation, I expected outreach to involve some sort of formal observation in a classroom with a follow-up meeting. This was based on my own experience of a PGCE mentor-style meeting, but I had to put this preconception aside. I was surprised to find the setting completely different. I was glad I had not tried to set up video equipment, but I did wish I had on different shoes, as much of the meeting took place in a chicken coop! The head teacher had asked Clive to have a look at the chickens, as he knew Clive had knowledge that was based on his own work as a former teacher of rural studies. This was of interest to Clive, as he hoped to restart the subject in his home school. I wondered if a reason for all the practical help was partly one of establishing his credibility and relationship with the other teacher. Would a Sports, D&T or Art AST demonstrate knowledge in the same practical way, or stand back and give advice?

The other half of the outreach visit took place in the more conventional setting of the science lab, and related to scheme-of-work planning. Throughout the visit there was a great deal of hands-on work and moving around between different places within the school for different sorts of support, accompanied by informal talk as we went. It would have been very difficult to make an audio or video recording without interfering with the movement. At the start and end of the visit Clive was in the fresh air and did hands-on examination of the chickens, as a vet might, then tried to get the incubator to work, then nailed chicken wire to bring more air into the coop

in the hot temperature, and then went back to the incubator with a lamp, showing the teacher how to tell whether the eggs had hatched. Clive rounded up the chickens and gave advice on the unhealthy-looking ones (“You’ll need anti-plucking spray for that one”).

Back in the science room, Clive was taking the lead in giving advice. Yet this seemed to be welcomed and was not patronizing or in response to an obvious weakness situation. I did not have a prepared observation schedule to complete. I tried to count the number of interactions with specific science references and curriculum advice that Clive was giving and demonstrating to the teacher, but there were so many that I can only estimate them as at least twelve apparently off-the-cuff references to web sites, books and QCA units. This was in addition to the prepared work schemes and DVD clips of animations and whiteboard resources prepared in advance. There was also a big box of practical science equipment loaned and returned, including some turtles. The teacher said that they were short on resources in the school.

I observed that he mentioned a range of contacts beyond his own school, showing extensive knowledge of other schools in the area, such as a primary school that could help with symbols for a non-reader, and an environmental centre suitable for a trip. Most of the advice seemed to be about what to teach and ways of assessing it, rather than how to teach. The teacher made some comments as they were leaving the meeting on how she would do better at teaching the subject the second time around. At the end of the meeting I asked the teacher if any of the AST work was about how to teach, and she responded that if you could teach one subject you could teach another. Thus Clive may have decided that his role was to help her with the subject content rather than teaching development. In other sessions they had done classroom work together, but on this visit he was taking her through a scheme of work for the coming months. The request for the outreach came via the central co-ordination of the LEA. During this visit the pupils were away on camp, so the interaction observed was between staff. At the end of the meeting, Clive reflected, “*Of course it is not all like this. Sometimes the meetings are difficult.*” This may have referred to approaching weaker teachers.

The teacher appeared extremely pleased with the support, and said every teacher should have someone like that. At the end of the meeting she responded to my question on the difference between an LEA advisor and an AST by a comparison with a recent advisor. *“Clive was prepared to get his hands dirty, whereas the advisor came in a suit.”* She also told me unprompted that Clive did not make her feel inferior for not being a scientist, and didn’t mind being contacted even at weekends or evenings. This reflected the importance of the social relationship, not just an exchange of curriculum advice, and is similar to the observation of Fielding et al. (2005).

Benefits

I started the AST interviews with a question on the benefits of the role as an introduction to their perceptions, and also collected data on this from the questionnaires. The purpose of this was to open up discussion on perceptions of the role, and to give voice to the AST perspective. Some responses related salary as a benefit, and one hesitated to describe a benefit; this was related to being under-used in the home school and blocked in outreach. The most common responses related to how being an AST renewed enthusiasm for teaching. If this is the case then it might indicate success in terms of recruitment and retention (Barber 2003).

“All ASTs who were interviewed were overwhelmingly enthusiastic about their AST role. They repeatedly spoke of their outreach work as stimulating enjoyable invigorating and satisfying. The great majority expressed a wish to remain as classroom teachers...” (Taylor and Jennings 2004, p. 11).

This reflects my findings from the AST interviews in 2004, when I found a similar response about maintaining motivation and innovation from two respondents at different schools who were at different ages and stages in their careers. Bethan, who gave her age as ‘above 50’, said:

“I was bored and I’d had enough...this gave me a new challenge that was working on what I really enjoy, which was the base in the classroom.” (Bethan, AST, December 2004). A younger AST

described the feeling of not wanting to become like the older, demoralised cynics in her school: *“And I did think: give me seven or eight years, and I’ll probably feel as negative as they are, and the AST has strengthened my enthusiasm.”* (Karen, AST, November 2004)

I see this as a renewed sense of professional commitment and enthusiasm.

My explanation is that this renewal seemed to work through a combination of a positive impact on the AST’s own professional development plus a sense of freedom and autonomy to experiment with different types of teaching.

For example, Elizabeth, based at a school in special measures, said that the combination of a positive Ofsted report in which she was personally identified and getting the AST status had made her more open about the things which had worked in her classroom. She implied that it was not previously acceptable to share practice or take risks. Similarly, Anne, working in a school in challenging circumstances, explained a school-wide change in acceptance of observation. It became part of the norm to talk about teaching and learning.

“It might seem a strange thing to say ...I mean teachers might have been expected to talk about it all the time, but in reality they didn’t.” (Anne, AST, December 2004)

This might indicate that ASTs could be seen as change agents in opening up classroom doors and making it acceptable to talk about teaching. According to Talbert and McLaughlin’s (1994) longitudinal US study, teacher interaction is related to teacher professionalism and community:

“...prior research on teaching suggests that privacy norms characteristic of the profession undermine capacity for teacher learning and sustained professional commitment. Conversely, teacher communities which promote collegial discourse and collaboration set conditions for shared professional standards to emerge and be enforced” (Talbert and McLaughlin, 1994, p. 128).

The AST on outreach is likely to meet a range of such privacy norms and collegial discourse, and this may impact on what they are allowed to do.

Variety was another benefit associated with seeing what goes in other schools. This was expressed by Sandra as *“it’s good to look over the fence”*. The spin-off in supporting other teachers was described as a reciprocal benefit of new ideas. One AST went so far as to suggest that all teachers would benefit from such contact. This variety was linked to another benefit of the job, described as freedom or being your own boss. I have linked this with a discussion of the flipside of autonomy in the next chapter. A head teacher speaker at conference A saw outreach as a way for ASTs to develop their own reflective skills, and in her school they were *“showing quite dramatic acceleration of their own practice”*. The benefit of this enthusiasm was seen as *“creative snowballing”*, according to the same head teacher. This links to David Hargreaves’ (2003) idea of *practitioner champions* and *advocate champions* who can influence others.

Becoming an AST therefore appeared to give many experimental teachers a licence to be creative. Several respondents valued the badge of AST as confirmation that what they were doing in the classroom was good enough to share, even if they had previously seen their own practice as different from the school norm. Their ideas were described as being *“off the wall”*, *“the one who does crazy things”*, or *“zinging things up a bit”*, and included work across subject departments, not just in their specialism.

There was an acceptance that this was sometimes related to getting things wrong. For example, at conference D, I noted at least five informal conversations where ASTs referred to the fact that they did not always get things right. I then went back through the data looking for this, and saw it was a theme of Karen’s view: *“...allowed me to experiment, to make mistakes and learn from them.”* (Karen, AST, November 2004). ASTs were keen not to come across as perfect, indeed they saw making mistakes as part of the process. This could be seen as the quality of how a good teacher develops in action according to Schön (1987) and Berliner (1993). However, although being flexible and self-critical may explain how the ASTs became expert, it does not tell us how they will support teachers who are not in the same category. This is one of the challenges of the role. In the policy, it is assumed that the good practice is transferable.

In the changed standards for ASTs (2007), I note the specific reference to *risk taking*. It may imply encouraging others to be risk-taking and inquiring, and offers the possibility of helping others to learn from critical incidents, as discussed in chapter 7.

Challenges

Challenge was a researcher concept that arose after the first stage research, when the findings indicated that exploring outreach was about understanding something that was still not established as a part of teacher work, and was difficult to pinpoint as a typical activity or in a typical location.

The first Ofsted report on ASTs (2001) indicated that outreach was a difficult aspect of the scheme, with some ASTs working in isolation or unsupported. This was seen as related to the way the scheme had been established, or to the reluctance of local authorities to plan strategically or link the AST work with other educational priorities, and was seen to have improved by the next report (Ofsted 2003).

I found that the local authority level was not adequate to explain ASTs differences in experiences, but that a combination of factors in the inter-school context might be more important. I analysed data on ASTs' interpretations of working between schools, where they described differences in ethos and organisation. Some of the differences might also have been related to external indicators and social capital.

One of the distinctive features of outreach is the need to work in a new collaborative way. The AST as a high-calibre teacher is required to help develop other teachers in a sustainable way and be able to continue to demonstrate excellence even with different pupils and within the contexts of different schools. In the UK, teachers generally apply to work in a specific school with its own local reputation and ethos. By contrast, in France or Spain teachers apply to a central administration for a post rather than to a

school. It would not be unusual in England to find schools within a few miles representing worlds apart in terms of socio-economic status, examination results, resources, ethos, and ability to attract staff and compete for local parents. AST respondents were based in individual schools, and this made them different from the former model of a local authority advisor, who was usually based at a teachers' centre.

I analysed the questionnaire data, and found the reported differences between outreach and home school were: working in a single-sex school, grammar school, school in challenging circumstances, special school, primary school, differences in student expectations and behaviour, differences in degree of contact with senior management, and differences in resources. I did not assume that all differences would be negative, only that they might need new strategies.

A specific difficulty reported in the questionnaire responses was "time". This was about a need for protected outreach time to travel to other schools. With only a few hours instead of a clear day, this restricted the work to preparing materials to pass on. In the next chapter, time as a data category is discussed in relation to agency, autonomy, and the head teacher's view of outreach. Another related difficulty of some respondents was that they were often still expected to fulfil the role of head of department plus an AST role even though they found this difficult, and DfES guidelines suggested otherwise. This was inconsistent, as some ASTs were only too happy to have left behind a role they associated with administration instead of creativity. I also found ambivalence over where ASTs should be located in relation to senior management, and this finding was overtaken by the proposed new standards, as discussed in the next chapter.

I made an association between challenge and uncomfortable new classroom contexts in the analysis of interviews and grouped these together. What was really difficult was the sensitivity of working with other pupils. Belinda:

"I earned my AST post in a school whose achievement is sort

of 65-70% with some extremely sensitive and very well-behaved students. And I go to this school and it's ... quite an oppressive testosterone atmosphere ... and these boys...it is very difficult to get them to listen, and I was kind of having to re-think my strategies, the ones that you've built up over years in one establishment, and I think it was humbling ...I think that in terms of my time with the lads, yes, it was humbling. I started to realize that in failing schools, and that's the label that they carry with them, there are a large number of students who want to learn and that perhaps are prevented from doing it, from admitting it." (Belinda, AST, November 2004)

This shows the impact of crossing a border in terms of rethinking expectations in context. In reflective practice, Schön (1987) outlines apprentices having to set aside preconceptions in order to progress. Setting aside preconceptions in a similar way to a researcher might be important for ASTs.

In contrast, one respondent, Anne, found that the challenge of outreach at a school in special measures was formative enough for her to take up an offer of a post as a deputy head teacher there. This happened in the time between the AST completing the survey and my interview with her. Her crossing-the-border experience had been very challenging:

"The culture of the school was absolutely anti- being observed, and when I joined as full time member of staff I met absolute hostility and out-and-out resentment from quite a number of people. One teacher said to me, 'Who the hell do you think you are? What are you doing coming into my classroom?' ... We were public enemy number one...Eighteen months on it's a very different story. We now have peer observations ...so we've gone from a point of real resistance and suspicion." (Anne, AST, December 2004).

This experience of a career move may be untypical, but it is also linked to the vignette of a school in special measures, where there was similar resistance to an external AST on outreach. In Anne's case, she made a career decision that becoming a deputy was an effective way to improve the

school. It also might confirm head teachers' fears that outreach could be about poaching good staff. Similarly, one AST observed at conference B saw limitations in working with individual teachers when what was needed were school-wide and department-level changes.

Homer made everyone in the conference workshop laugh when he said that his lesson with unfamiliar pupils in an outreach school was such a disaster of behaviour management that he made the recipient teacher feel much better. It would have been interesting to investigate a pupil response to being taught by a new teacher (Ruddock and Flutter, 2004). Behind these examples of behaviour management lies a minefield of stereotypes of "*nice schools*" (respondent category) and failing schools (Tomlinson 1997). I suggest from my data that ASTs may be in a position to break these down if the experience of coming face-to-face with differences in ethos, behaviour and school status could be seen as challenging but also beneficial, and an example of a "*critical incident*" or significant learning episode (Tripp 1993). I developed a stage one working hypothesis about outreach in deficit or emergency situations and this is discussed in chapter 6.

I found that ASTs did have some ways of avoiding challenge from unfamiliar classrooms, and this was to leave the recipient teacher to tackle the class and instead to spend the outreach time doing joint planning, development of resources or running whole-staff training sessions. This took me back to the list of outreach activities where some tasks, such as demonstrating in one's home school, might be more comfortable than others. Joint planning opportunities may be subject to time restrictions, but may be criticised in terms of Hargreaves (1994) as "*safe simulations of co-operation*" (p. 13). On the other hand, that may be appropriate where the focus is content rather than method, and Hargreaves refers to this as "*respecting the teachers' discretionary judgments in their own classrooms*" (p. 61). The ways in which ASTs need to be sensitive to other teachers' experiences, territories and values is explored in the next chapter.

The findings about outreach are part of the findings on perceptions on the role in general. I found a perception of stakeholders that the AST role has

now moved to being seen as successful, despite the early hostile reception when the AST model was launched (Blake 2000; Sutton et al. 2000). Their explanation of why the AST was valued was that they have kudos as credible practitioners:

“There’s immense credibility because they can say, ‘I had the same with mine yesterday’, and here is the authentic voice from the classroom.” (LEA Officer, Rivershire).

The implication is that teachers want relevant professional development rooted in practice, although this is subject to debate in educational history.

“It works because it comes straight from the classroom...AST work tangibly makes a difference.” (LEA Consultant, Hillshire).

Similarly, a DfES officer referred to the reciprocity inherent in the support role:

“There’s a shift away from the elitist view because of the quality of work of individuals...the strength is that it is peer-to-peer, not top-down, and they actually learn by giving. This is what underpins it.” (DfES officer).

Discussion of chapter 4 findings

This chapter has presented some illustrations of outreach work undertaken in Hillshire and Rivershire in answer to the questions *“What is outreach?”* and *“In what way is outreach distinctive?”* by analysing data on AST perceptions of the benefits and challenges of the AST outreach role. The chapter has also presented some findings on how the local authorities evaluate outreach.

Outreach is distinctive because it involves working in different contexts, largely alone, with new colleagues. I compare this challenge to ASTs being travellers “crossing the borders”. Some travellers are like package tourists, taking the relatively safe and comfortable option of technical training in a local primary school, while others are on a high-risk exploration adventure, face-to-face with culture shock in a secondary school in different contexts. I also found that some ASTs were stranded at the station; the challenge here was finding outreach, or being allowed release time by the home head teacher.

The ASTs in this study generally liked their role, and could report benefits to their own professional development from doing outreach and working with other teachers. Two major benefits of the AST role were reported as the professional stimulus from working with other teachers, and a licence to try new things in terms of pedagogy. It was difficult to separate out how much this stimulation and licence to innovate came from the general badge of the role at the home school and how much from outreach alone, because I had not compared the AST at their home school with outreach. I noted that some ASTs referred to running teaching and learning groups for other staff in their home school.

The key difficulties reported by respondents were time, and how their role related to other priorities in a school. These are explored in the next chapter alongside autonomy, which was seen as a benefit of outreach in some cases, but also as a challenge if it was not granted. I elicited the challenge of working in different classroom contexts. There was a particular sensitivity about different expectations of pupil behaviour and classroom management in different schools.

As part of understanding the distinctive nature of outreach practice I found that the observation of a highly skilled AST provided a rich source of new “thick” data, plus some surprises which would never have emerged in an interview alone. I treated this data as a snapshot rather than a typical outreach visit, which provided some preliminary explanations.

For example, the most unexpected finding in the vignette of Clive was that the support was hands-on and very practical on this occasion. The egg collecting and lesson planning were tailored not only to the rural context of the school but also to the needs of pupils with special needs outside a mainstream school. This might fit Schön’s (1987) definition of *knowing in action*, with the emphasis on *showing rather than telling*.

I also noted that interaction between the teachers was warm and informal, and there appeared to be a sense of trust and respect between them. It was not a hierarchical expert-with-novice situation, even though most of the

suggestions were coming from Clive. His knowledge about science teaching and resources was being adapted to the teacher and to the setting. This was a different type of teacher talk than a coaching-type session (Joyce and Showers 1996). Without seeing all the other sessions it was difficult to say if this was an instance of straightforward knowledge transfer, or closer to the “*joint practice development*” described by Fielding, who also emphasised trust as a condition. This is similar to other studies of collaborative CPD (Cordingley et al. 2005), where the setting of school-based CPD was seen as an important reference point.

Clive had extensive contacts with local schools throughout the authority, and with other teachers with expertise. I interpret this as Clive redistributing teaching resources in the form of time and knowledge, plus the loan of equipment. This might have been “beyond the call of duty” and an unofficial form of outreach, but he saw that the resources were necessary for the teacher to do the job. In his large secondary school with GCSE results above the average and the resources associated with specialist status, he had access to a science technician. His “box of tricks” included some turtles, some microscopes, and a DVD of animations prepared by the technician. This combination of knowledge sharing and physical representation of the work might be compared to brokering which would be a component towards a community of practice (Wenger 1998). It could also be seen as an example of teacher autonomy. It also raises questions about the difference in resources in schools of different sizes.

I saw it as significant that Clive’s visit was part of a long-term involvement rather than a one-off session which might be of limited impact. A follow-up study could look at the significance of the amount of outreach time spent in outreach work. This might also be linked with capacity building and the questions of impact and sustainability. I did not collect data on the cost models from a local authority perspective, but I was aware that all ASTs were expected to report time spent in outreach to the local authority. In contrast, the most minimal outreach visit is described in another study as just a conversation (Bennett et al. 2006). In the conclusion, a recommendation is made for using discretion and flexibility for outreach time where more might be needed for some projects.

Outreach is distinctive because it requires a support role and the transfer of good practice. One of the interview questions – *What are the steps involved in working with another practitioner?* – did not elicit the response I wanted to uncover values and pedagogy. As a participant on another study, I also noted this was also the most difficult area to uncover in interview. On reflection, the question was poorly worded, as many responses recounted administrative protocols where I was looking for the development of the relationship. One respondent said she did not agree with the step-by-step approach to teaching, which I interpreted as referring to a standardised skills approach.

The concept of the reflective practitioner (Schön 1987) is especially relevant to the research questions of “what is outreach?” and “how do ASTs work with other professionals?” As the findings in this chapter show, respondents report that working with others made them develop new ideas on their own work through the support side of the role. The problem of making the implicit explicit may be difficult in terms of describing tacit “*knowing in action*”, especially for intuitive practitioners constantly adapting to different contexts. ASTs listed a typical activity as other teachers coming to their school to see demonstration lessons, as well as the AST visiting outreach schools. At one conference an AST reported not knowing what to do in such a situation. This might indicate lack of experience or inadequate needs identification. I also wondered how this might fit Schön’s (1987) ideas on how the teaching and learning process can go wrong in the research context of an AST and recipient teacher, but for access and ethical reasons it was not possible to explore this practically. Schön presents a case where student and instructor are locked into low-level reflection because the student is defensive and the instructor is reluctant to voice negative views. The student has to put aside both what she knows and her deference to the instructor’s authority, and undertake “*cognitive risk taking ...to experience a zone of uncertainty ...leading to reciprocal reflection in action*”. This question is also raised in relation to the possibility of the lack of challenge in mentoring.

Outreach is also distinctive because teaching in more than one school location is not a model frequently seen in the UK except where there is a shortage – for example, in relation to supply teachers, primary language teachers or peripatetic music teachers. In the Hillshire procedure documents there is a clear message that ASTs should not be used as supply teachers. Yet some of accounts of outreach work in Hillshire, Rivershire and Ofsted reports could be interpreted as describing the supplying of a subject specialist need, as in the vignette in this chapter, more frequently so in primary science outreach. For the AST this is often seen in terms of boosting the confidence of the teacher, and in this case outreach comes closer to mentoring or coaching. In the pilot interview with Homer (from another authority), he described ASTs' outreach work involving updating teachers from overseas on UK curricula. This may be related to teacher shortages in some areas of the south of England, and also featured in other research on ASTs close to London (Bennett et al. 2006). Thus ASTs were able to make a distinction between providing an update of specialist knowledge, which they saw as more satisfying, and being left in a class of strange pupils with no support and out of context. This thought was expressed by Belinda, who had mainly negative experiences of outreach:

“I think my definition of AST work is that which when I leave something is left behind, carried forward, and I don't really feel that was true. I didn't have anyone observe my teaching, I didn't produce a scheme of work, you know, all of those things would have, I think, meant that what I was doing was genuinely AST.” (Belinda, AST, November 2004).

At the end of the first stage of research I developed a working model of some outreach as a “deficit model” as seen in an emergency supply situation, and others (like Clive) as a solo model. This was usually the deployment of ASTs into failing schools, including experience reported by Irene working across the border in another local authority, and was seen as satisfying in terms of feedback from pupils. Elsewhere, ASTs reported that working in deficit situations should be limited.

The affective and emotional impact of teaching in other contexts, particularly around behaviour management and perceptions, is very clear in the interview data, and links to research (Berliner 1993; Day 1999). Although I expected to hear about challenges in matching different values of pedagogy, the more frequent challenge having an emotional impact on the AST in other classrooms was reported as behaviour management in different schools. This might be explained as pupils viewing the AST as a supply teacher or outsider, or that ASTs were experiencing a sort of culture shock and did not have enough time to adjust their classroom strategies. A similar type of culture shock for the AST as outsider was reported in outreach at a school in special measures, where the challenge was in being accepted by staff when there was no culture of observation. In this case the AST decided to take up a job in the school.

Although I had narrowed the sample to Secondary ASTs and did not intend to focus on Primary ASTs, I did come across primary and secondary issues. Primary ASTs attended the conferences and responded to my survey, indicating some dissatisfaction with their pay scale. Also, some Secondary AST interview respondents referred to work with primary schools as a key part of their outreach in terms of shortages. This is relevant because it raises the question of why they were not working with other secondary schools in outreach, or whether Primary ASTs came to secondary schools. If the outreach work is seen in terms only of subject shortages then this explains a one-way traffic.

My sample selection of ASTs aimed for a balance of English and Science ASTs. Although I expected that these different curricular areas might reflect different values about being an AST, this was not the case. I did find that the English ASTs in Hillshire were more likely to report lack of outreach. In both authorities the Science ASTs were more likely to be involved in demonstrating the use of technology, such as interactive whiteboards. It may be that technology training is a quick and easily measurable intervention.

It is important to place these data in the context of the overall findings that outreach was generally seen as a benefit to the AST where it was possible to

gain some experience. Other problems were not having enough outreach, or not being allowed sufficient time to the job properly. I have focused on uncomfortable experiences of outreach as an under-researched area. Elsewhere, work with other teachers is described in terms of getting down to the work with no emphasis on differences in context. For example, in accounts of work with primary schools, there was no reported pupil misbehaviour. It was not possible to triangulate this or explore how pupils or teachers viewed secondary outreach teachers, because I did not want the ASTs to feel I was making individual evaluations. As my understandings of challenge deepened, I deliberately sought to interview ASTs at schools in special measures as part of understanding differences in local contexts.

This chapter demonstrates a range of factors that make outreach distinctive as a model of professional development and some local reasons why ASTs were introduced. Understanding outreach is important since it may also reflect some older problems of CPD and teaching. According to Hargreaves: *“Most teachers still teach alone, behind closed doors in the insulated and isolated environment of their own classrooms.”* (Hargreaves, A. 1994, p. 167). Over a decade later, this would still seem to be the case.

Chapter 5

How do ASTs work with other professionals in other contexts?

Chapter overview

This chapter presents findings related to the third research question on how ASTs work with other professionals. ASTs use collegiality and informal networking as strategies in their outreach. The findings on collegiality are discussed in the light of changing new standards for ASTs. How ASTs work in other contexts is subject to competing demands from their home school, their local authority, and their own interests. This is discussed under the theme of autonomy. An example of ASTs with limited autonomy is found in the vignette of a school in special measures where outreach is suspended for home school staff but increased for incoming ASTs.

ASTs demonstrating collegiality

When the press dubbed ASTs “superteachers” at the launch of the initiative (Howson 2001; Goodwyn & Fidler 2003), they did not do them any favours. This sample of AST respondents had found a way to deal with the derisive label, with its overtones of a comic book hero. The way they dealt with it was through strong communication skills, taking time to develop trust and conveying the fact that their role is a supportive one. I argue that this is a form of demonstrating collegiality.

In my initial data analysis, I used the code “levelling” and then linked this to “collegiality” as the nearest theoretical framework (Hargreaves 1994) to explain the acceptance of ASTs through working hard to overcome any notions of superiority and establishing a reputation for being supportive by offering practical help based on experience. I sum this up as the strategy of behaving in a way to demonstrate collegiality. If there has been a shift to a wider acceptance of the AST role, then I suggest that this acceptance may not be just because ASTs are practising teachers, but also because they are

prepared to present themselves as imperfect and to step down from the superteacher pedestal. This relates to key concepts in reflective practice.

This was also the view of Mike:

“I think the problem with the AST image I suppose which is now disappearing slightly, is people saw ASTs as being excellent this, excellent that, almost like walk on water type people. I think that barrier has now been broken down, we say look, we're really no different to anybody else who's teaching, it's just that we've bothered to go through this assessment in the sense that we can have this status, but what it means is that we can come in and work with you and perhaps we can work with you to improve your teaching, in fact we learn from you as much as you learn from us.”

(Mike, AST, January 2005).

I interpret this stance as de-mystifying the notion of expert and making it less threatening. It may be part of developing trust (Fielding et al. 2005; Rudd et al. 2004). Shulman's (2004) view is that learning opportunities are to be found in the incongruity between theory and practice. Therefore not knowing all the answers and finding ways to solve practical puzzles is part of the process of development, as well as of the credibility of ASTs, and also relates to the wider framework of reflective practice.

By becoming less threatening and appearing collegial or “one of the crowd”, ASTs may have found a way to prove themselves. For example, on a school visit, one internal AST was described by the senior management as very popular and highly skilled. He was welcomed in all departments across the school and was the object of good-natured teasing by staff who greeted him with *“Here comes Billy Whizz in his cape.”* This seemed designed to remind the teacher not to get above his station, but also implied a shared humour and understanding in a culture where classroom miracles were perhaps rare.

Beyond my sample, this mood of wider acceptance is also seen in articles from the education press (McGavin 2004):

“AST is such an arrogant title... you don't become an AST without the help and support of your colleagues. The school is a team and the staffroom is a team and different people play different roles. There are no gripes about me being an AST.” [McGavin 2004, online]

This implies a similar attitude to collegiality.

As the researcher, I was especially interested in how ASTs would set about working with different teachers in different schools, and framed this as a key research question. In accounts of outreach practice, I came to the view that demonstrating collegiality was a strategy used not just with known colleagues in the home school, but with unknown colleagues in outreach. This finding was unexpected because my understanding from the literature was that collegiality was rooted in examples of internal school collaborative work rather than between schools. Thus “collegiality” turned out to be a key part of my explanation.

However, Hargreaves (1994) sees the flipside of collegiality as a contrived or imposed control of teachers. This might well have been the view of some recipients of AST outreach, depending on how the work had been arranged and the origin of the request.

In order to build up supportive working relationships with teachers in other schools, the ASTs managed to find a way to present themselves in a non-threatening way, and this was a deliberate stance. According to Mike, it involves “*making them see you're there to help...not there to spy.*” I understood “not spying” as staying firmly on the side of supporting the teacher and not getting involved in collecting evidence which might lead to dismissal. In both local authorities where fieldwork was carried out, the ASTs were quite clear that they would not get involved in competency procedures unless as a preventative measure. Clive:

“You have to be very careful to read situations and what might be behind it politically...the big benefit is we're non-judgmental...there's no threat in working alongside. So we very gently build up relationships.” (Clive, AST, December 2004)

One possible follow-up to this study would be to compare attitudes to joint work in other professions, such as nursing.

The use of the word “non-judgmental” is relevant, implying that an inspector-like external presence in the classroom would be punitive rather than helpful. In this chapter I am arguing that collegiality was a deliberate stance, as seen in the reportedly supportive informal and peer-directed approach. However, I did not collect data on the exact local circumstances which might have led ASTs to adopt such a strategy, such as imposition or lack of understanding of the role. If the ASTs experience was that the core business of teaching has been done in isolation from peers, it may stem from an implicit belief in the need to approach this boundary with caution. However, the term “non-judgmental” may indicate an avoidance of critical dialogue and challenge, as discussed in chapter 2.

This also links to middle leaders’ reluctance to undertake appraisal, which might be seen as surveillance or failure of trust (Bennett et al. 2003a). This finding of tension within the middle leadership role is important because some ASTs in my sample had been subject leaders or heads of department, and some continued to hold that role. This is important in the light of debates about professional development versus performance management and accountability. Day (1999) sees the introduction of appraisal systems as presenting different opportunities or threats to teachers’ responses.

“At one end of the continuum, creative and dynamic teachers will relish the possibilities raised by appraisal. At the other, appraisal systems will be prisons of constraint to teachers who lack self-confidence in their own abilities...Invitations to be developed may be seen to imply present inadequacies.” (Day 1999)

According to Day (1999), traditional cultures of teaching mean that it is not easy to accept help from strangers.

One of the ways around the possibility of spying was openness. According to Bethan from Rivershire, who made it clear that any written reports had to be transparent, in line with local authority policy:

“I have had the odd head who has asked me to comment on departments or members of staff. The only way I have done that is very positively and feeding back so they all see it. I e-mail my reply because it's a little insidious and I'm not going down that route.” (Bethan, AST, December 2004).

She went on to stress the need for confidentiality and for taking care not to tell home colleagues which schools or colleagues she was working with. I took this as a sign of professionalism. This also links with the Hillshire policy protocol document, where ASTs are not expected to write references.

One local justification for collegiality seemed to be the early mishandling of some early outreach visits, where a head teacher had not always consulted the teacher in question. To overcome any sense that an outreach visit from an AST might be remedial than developmental, ASTs often telephoned first and built up a rapport over several visits, and negotiated the work to be done.

This finding on the preferred stance of ASTs to be encouraging rather than judgmental corresponds to other data on ASTs. See, for example, a finding in Taylor and Jennings' (2004) survey of 970 ASTs, where *“the ability to encourage others to perform to the best of their abilities”* was ranked as the top competency. In comparison, *“being able to identify and challenge underperformance in others”* was ranked as the least appropriate activity.

Similarly, this reluctance to challenge underperformance is also an issue faced by mentors, particularly in Initial Teacher Training. This raises a question about whether being non-judgmental, collegial and not challenging represents a type of interaction, and makes it too comfortable. Or it may be a deliberate decision in peer coaching (Joyce and Showers 1996) where the onus is on the mentees to come up with their own solutions. In order to find out how ASTs tackled underperformance, I reviewed data from interviews and the conference sessions.

I revisited the data where some interviewees talked about how they would support a weak teacher. There was general agreement on starting with the positive and thus not alienating the teacher. According to Bethan:

“It's also about diplomacy and tact and personal skills and it's knowing very quickly where to pitch. If they're coming in to see me do a model lesson and it's a weaker teacher it's no good me doing an all-singing, all-dancing lesson because I'll scare them off. What I do is a good or very good lesson because they can achieve that; but if I'm working with a good teacher who wants to move to excellent I'll do the all-singing, all-dancing lesson.” (Bethan, AST, December 2004).

I was surprised at the extent to which this AST was able to offer a varied repertoire, and by this respondent's use of Ofsted categories. This knowing where to pitch may be a skill developed in working with pupils. It may also be linked to Schön's master practitioners, who help trainees see what they need to see.

Similarly, collegiality and ability to reflect are seen in Karen's illustration of helping a teacher with weak communication skills. By her account, she maintained a non-threatening stance by focusing on a specific skill area and how to overcome it:

“Because you could sit down and say to someone, ‘That was an absolutely awful lesson’. But what's that going to do? ... And I think in this profession, when someone has spent so much time planning their lesson and the content is just superb, you have to encourage that person.”
(Karen, AST, November 2004).

In the feedback, she focused on the lesson content, which was good, and eventually the teacher agreed that she needed to do something about voice projection, and agreed to be filmed and supported by another AST, watching it together. She then went to make comparisons with how she had been taught on the PGCE, and how it had taken her some time to find a comfortable teaching style:

“It takes you a while to adapt and to learn what works with you.” (Karen, AST, November 2004).

This implies an understanding of teacher development and a willingness to learn.

I came across different views of peer observation and how to allow teachers to develop. At an AST conference discussion there was a consensus about the need to be tactful rather than over-directive. Attending the annual conferences in Hillshire gave some continuity to my observation of Mike. At his interview, Mike mentioned a coaching project starting in the home school. The following year, at the annual AST conference, I found out more about the impact of the project in the home school and Mike's role in it. Mike and a colleague had made a video demonstrating the wrong way to offer post-observation feedback to a colleague by being too critical and confrontational. According to the presenters, getting people to come up with their own solutions through open-ended questioning was preferable to them becoming dependent or being criticized. Some ASTs, after seeing the video, commented that coaching was only one model of interacting, and not necessarily appropriate for all situations. This was similar to Clive's distinction between levels of help needed for teachers at different stages with different needs.

I decided it was ethically unwise to request to directly observe a situation of an AST tackling underperformance. Instead, I looked to analysis of accounts of how ASTs tackled this, and this also related to maintaining collegiality. I understood this to be an initial way to behave with colleagues in a non-threatening way, working from the assumption that teachers can improve with encouragement. The collegiality was used to play down the status and emphasise similarities to others.

Yet many privately saw granting of AST status as a significant stage in their career and as a source of personal achievement and pride, and one they had to live up to. The badge is one which counts for something. The process of becoming an AST involves feedback from colleagues, as well as external assessment. Sandra saw it as an endorsement:

"Teachers are the first ones to undersell themselves. And obviously it gives you a lot of credibility ...and it's nice to see and feel your own colleagues endorsing the fact that you do quite a good job and you have got a lot to offer to other members of the profession, not just pupils in front of you."

(Sandra, AST, January 2005).

The need for colleagues' support and recognition is an important point here, and is one echoed by Karen:

"... when you get that feedback sheet and you think is that me, is that how people see me, which is amazing. I think a lot of people are frightened by the process but they don't realize what rewards you get, and also it's quite nice to put yourself to the test. I think it's good for you because it does keep you on your toes, you keep up your good work." (Karen, AST, November 2004).

AST use of informal networks for outreach

Both Hillshire and Rivershire authorities reported that they had centralized systems for allocating outreach to ASTs. Yet despite this, my finding was that ASTs did not rely on this method alone to find outreach, and some did not rely on it at all. I found that the majority of ASTs in my sample used friendships and informal networks to supplement the local authority quota or sometimes to start up their outreach practice. This was sufficiently frequent that I decided to classify informal networking as an outreach strategy. Like collegiality, it is another example of AST teacher agency and also relates to concepts of brokering and community building (Wenger 1998).

Respondents who were doing outreach found it via one or a combination of the following routes:

1. Being matched to schools according to a centralised local authority request system or local authority deployment of the AST in an advisory capacity. This sometimes included a "deficit" model of sending ASTs to schools in challenging circumstances in and out of the authority.
2. Being guided by home school head teacher to work with existing school networks, most notably Primary feeder schools or specialist school partners.

3. Using their own personal contacts and friendship networks to gain entry to a school which would count as outreach but was outside any formal partnership range of the school, or to explicitly publicise their services.

Making contacts with a wider group of professionals and becoming known beyond the home school was important for outreach. For example, although Irene said she didn't really agree with national literacy policies, she planned to offer some training sessions as a means of publicising her availability for outreach. Informal networking was an unexpected finding, and all the more so since I had pre-selected interviewees with significant experience of outreach. I had to think again about why ASTs took it upon themselves to find their own outreach work.

In the first pilot interview, (November 2004) I noted Homer's comments on working with a local teacher in outreach: "*Of course, I have known Fred for years*". I did not see them as relevant until several equivalent remarks about "*knowing Fred*" became a pattern in the data. This suggested the significance of informal networks, and the importance of trust in working with known people became clear. Other examples in the data were:

- trying to get access to a local school in response to a friend's request, even though no links existed at head teacher level
- writing to all local schools to advertise services
- running a course or CPD session via the LEA network
- offering support to a school where the head of department was sick and the AST was a friend
- getting a list of newly qualified teachers in the area from the LEA in order to write and offer support
- doing CPD sessions in a school where a spouse is working
- using networks already established through being a Specialist School
- setting up a project to work across the county based on friendships with other ASTs plus local authority meetings

If I had known about these categories at the start, I might have collected quantitative data to measure the frequency of outreach found via informal means compared to outreach allocated by the local authority. I acknowledge a limitation in that my sample was ASTs with sufficient outreach experiences to recall, but was it more typical to have little or no outreach? It might have been difficult to get respondents to admit to not doing any outreach at all except in a carefully constructed survey format. Some respondents hinted that they were not allocated enough, and knew other ASTs with no outreach.

The problem of establishing outreach work is seen in reports as a local authority problem. Ofsted (2001) claimed that over half were not using the outreach time. A later report (Ofsted 2003, p. 12) noted that the outreach arrangements were much improved where local authorities had become active and strategic in their management of outreach. Taylor and Jennings (2004, p. 14) reported that outreach was the least satisfactory aspect of LEA management, and that outreach experiences varied considerably according to local authority or school. In my interview with the DfES officer, the view was expressed that it was appropriate for each local authority to devise their own management strategies.

My own explanation would be that ASTs use their own networks because the existing collaborative infrastructure is not sufficiently developed, and because friendship-based trust may help their work. In other parts of England at this time, there were contrasting examples of schools working together with a strong sense of local area identity based on project funding for collaboration (Woods et al. 2006). A finding was that often head teachers were key catalysts, and the local authority could not necessarily impose any deep collaboration. Even with head teachers promoting collaboration, this did not penetrate to all levels of school staff unless they had time to visit each others' classrooms.

Another explanation for the need for informal networks could be the human need for a sense of trust. Trust is a recurring theme in the literature on collaboration. Arnold (2006), Rudd et al. (2004), and Fielding et al. (2005) refer to the sophisticated brokering skills needed by ASTs.

A closely related explanation is that ASTs want to have control of their outreach rather than be directed somewhere that may be uncomfortable. This would fit with Fullan's view of adapting centralized change, and the importance of teacher agency in CPD. My interview data suggested that the importance of knowing people was a two-way process. Local authorities reported requests for specific ASTs with a reputation, even though they tried to provide an even spread of outreach requests.

The importance of informal networking implies a further finding: in reality. ASTs need the right kinds of personal qualities to create outreach opportunities. Outreach is not out there waiting to be done, but has to be found or created. Fielding et al. also expressed concern that some teachers will be more self-effacing as opposed to confident or entrepreneurial (2005, p. 85). Fielding's concept of the entrepreneurial teacher would match the views of Harry. According to his seven years' experience as an AST, taking the initiative was a necessity:

"I think ASTs finding their niche and finding their little pocket of outreach work, that's either going to make the job or break it. Some you speak to and they've been in the job for six months and you say, who are you working with, and they say, 'I haven't really got round to doing any outreach work yet', and you think: 'Hang on! They're waiting for it to come to them and if you do that you don't do anything'."

(Harry, AST, January 2006).

I note that in the proposed new 2006 standards for ASTs as leaders there is no explicit reference to this entrepreneurial quality, although this might be implied by the reference to leadership, as discussed later in this chapter.

Challenges to AST autonomy in outreach

As seen in chapter 2, teacher autonomy is a theme in the literature on professional development, where it is related to a wider debate about accountability, centralised control and professionalism (Bernier and

McClelland 1989; McIntyre and Hagger 1996; Hargreaves, A 1994). One criticism of traditional professional development is that it is not tailored or sustainable, and that a quick fix is not always appropriate. Another is that it is not sustained because it is not owned but rather is *“developed according to the agendas, structures and strategies of others”* (Bernier and McClelland 1989). This tension dates from other educational reforms as outlined in the introduction.

The use of “autonomy” in this study relates to data where ASTs report having the freedom or self-determination within their role to plan their own time and priorities, including moving away from the home school in outreach. In the case of outreach, the other teachers’ autonomy also came into the balance. Whether the teacher in the outreach school had any autonomy in requesting or refusing AST input was variable, and this situation might be subject to the earlier criticisms of professional development for the agendas of others.

I argue that AST autonomy is fragile, since it is subject to demands from the home school or local authority. On the one hand, ASTs saw one of the joys of the job as the freedom and autonomy of outreach. There was a fine line between autonomy as a benefit rather than a challenge. For example, Tom and Belinda were in the same school and in different departments and were interviewed one year apart, but both ASTs made reference to a need to *“justify the role”*. They implied that their inreach job was more visible and important than outreach, and that their outreach time was tightly controlled and blocked by the head teacher, who only allowed them out for specific purposes. This relates to other data on the need for AST outreach time to be protected, as was expressed by all ASTs and the local authority officers. Both local authorities covered large geographical areas, and travelling between schools had to be accounted for. If outreach time was cut down into smaller chunks this placed restrictions on what could be done.

Head teachers have the power to block or restrict outreach through timetabling and through the degree of autonomy granted. In Hillshire and

Rivershire there were reported examples of heads blocking outreach, although the local authorities claimed this was a small number. This shows that the extent of teacher agency is limited and that ASTs are caught between the demands from the head teacher and the local authority. Both local authority officers reported that they would withdraw funding if a head did not allow enough AST time for outreach. However, this power to “police” outreach was fragile and limited, because control of AST funding was changing during the research period, with new plans for funding to go directly to schools. I considered what the changed funding arrangements would mean for the future of outreach.

The other consideration affecting the professional autonomy of outreach was the autonomy of the recipient teacher in being able to refuse or request help. Some ASTs said their work was affected by whether or not they had been imposed, or whether the request for the AST had come via the head teacher or the recipient. This might relate to fears of monitoring and the importance of the informal networking. In a major review of studies on CPD (Bolam and Weindling 2006), teacher agency was a key factor:

“The findings confirmed that the more influence teachers have over their own CPD, the more likely they are to consider it effective”. (Bolam and Weindling 2006, p. 75)

A follow-up study to look at the extent of the influence of teachers on outreach would be desirable, but was beyond the scope of the design of this study. Bearing in mind the importance of informal networks, it should be noted that the central outreach request forms in Hillshire were sent to head teachers.

The constraints on AST autonomy are illustrated in the following vignette of an emergency context; it also highlights the importance of the local inter-school competitive context.

Vignette: emergency context of outreach at visit to ASTs at a school in special measures

In January 2006, I visited a secondary school in a Rivershire area of relative social deprivation in order to interview the deputy head teacher, assistant head teacher and two home-based ASTs. At the time of the visit, the school was in special measures, and the 2005 Ofsted report had described the teaching in many departments as unsatisfactory or poor. The school wanted more ASTs but had been unsuccessful in recruiting Science or English ASTs, and currently had ASTs in Maths, D&T, and MFL. I came to this school through a local authority contact, following up on interview data where I learnt that ASTs had been sent to schools in special measures as a deliberate policy. I thought it was important to include ASTs from a range of schools and to see the whole school context *in situ*.

At the time of the visit the whole school priority, understandably, was rapid internal school improvement. As part of this the ASTs had become part of the senior management team in order to carry out a programme of monitoring teaching performance and providing teaching and learning input. This involved classroom observation and weekly meetings to discuss priority areas for development. The view of the internal ASTs was that staff were pulling together as a team, but I did not interview other staff to check this. The monitoring of teaching quality was planned in such a way as to cover one key aspect at a time, backed up by appropriate training. I collected an example of monitoring documentation at the visit (Appendix C).

The school was also receiving external assistance from an LEA team and external ASTs. It was not possible to meet the external AST. There was a mixed view about what it was like to receive external help. From a senior management perspective it was well received as long as it was targeted to the departments most in need. When the tape recorder had been turned off, a comment was made about one department resisting help from an external subject specialist AST who was about to give up due to this resistance.

Outreach work was currently suspended, but in the past had been mainly with feeder primary schools. Schools in special measures or challenging circumstances are exempt by the DfES from having to do outreach. One example of outreach in another local secondary came through personal connections. Personal networks have been important to all ASTs, and this shows that the LEA organisation alone is not enough. One AST described providing resources in the form of sewing machines to a local primary school, and had been pleased to do this. A view was expressed that part of the problems in the school was to do with intake and a local secondary as competitor. Creating a good impression in primary schools was seen as part of winning a different market share.

Apart from AST outreach, there were links at the level of the head of one specific department between this school and another highly successful school through the specialist status. The view expressed was that this was mutually beneficial, partly because this school was out of the area and not a local competitor. This situation of being able to work with far-away schools more easily than the school down the road was also a feature of data arising from the *Diversity Pathfinders* research.

Discussion of findings in this chapter

This chapter relates to the third question on how ASTs work with other professionals in other contexts. One of the contexts covered here is the emergency context where AST autonomy and outreach are suspended. In the vignette, the rationale for ASTs being involved in classroom monitoring was that this was an emergency situation. If it had to be done, then as trusted insiders they could keep the focus on teaching and learning issues. As seen in the documentation in Appendix C, the focus was on weekly themes, such as differentiation, and this approach was seen as more helpful than giving mock Ofsted gradings in preparation for the next inspection. This situation contrasts with other data on ASTs who did not want to be seen as monitoring for fear it would undermine collegiality.

Although the home ASTs had suspended outreach, there were a considerable number of external visitors wanting to come to the school at this time, but different departments gave different responses to such offers of help. An external AST was finding it difficult to gain access to one department, but in another department outreach contact had been welcomed, and was based on a previous connection through the school's specialist network which I had not previously considered as a stakeholder. The different responses also show the "*balkanisation*" of departments (Hargreaves 1994).

The vignette also shows that the reality of market forces impacted on AST work. It is significant that there was very little outreach with other secondary schools nearby except through informal contact via a spouse. The primary school outreach was explicitly about marketing.

In this situation I noted that the distribution of resources to the local primary school is similar to the box of science resources carried by Clive and the brokering described by Wenger (1998). Again, it was seen as meeting a real need, but I wondered if this was unofficial and might be unlikely to feature on an evaluation form.

The ASTs had to forfeit their autonomy of outreach to visit other schools in order to prioritise the urgent situation of special measures in the home school. The view was that outreach work had been a welcome relief and a benefit, but that it was right to reduce the focus on getting the school out of special measures. This situation was in contrast with Clive in the previous chapter, who had a high degree of autonomy and whose home school was regarded as successful. This implies different degrees of autonomy for different types of school, and fits with the idea of "earned autonomy" as a reward, a point made about Leading Edge schools. (Source: DfES conference, July 2003).

The vignette showed the importance of the local context and the local schools market on the AST experience of inreach and outreach. It also

suggested that although individual ASTs may use collegiality and informal networking as an extension of their own social capital, this may not be sufficient to overcome the external contextual challenges of outreach.

This chapter has presented collegiality and the use by ASTs of informal networks as personal and professional strategies in developing their outreach work. The data suggests that through a non-confrontational stance and entrepreneurial spirit, some AST respondents did tackle some of the challenges of outreach. Against this, I suggest that some of the challenges of outreach reflect entrenched local divisions between schools that can make it particularly challenging for an AST to exercise autonomy.

I used the term “*collegiality*” to explain the findings of ASTs presenting themselves as supportive, equal colleagues rather than as superior external experts. This was reportedly maintained even in sensitive situations of underperformance through accentuating the positive. I see collegiality as a part of a toolkit used in crossing school borders. It includes respect for the different stages of development of teachers (Berliner 1993), and giving teachers a sense of participation and ownership. Collegiality is a way to bring the superteacher image back down to earth, and is a credit to the communication skills of the ASTs.

One disadvantage of being collegial may be a reluctance to challenge when needed, as in mentoring (Burgess and Butcher 1999), and a reluctance to undertake official monitoring, as in middle management (Wise 2001).

Taylor and Jennings’ (2004) data confirm this with regard to ASTs:

“This tension between support and assessment has always existed in teacher development, particularly ITT, and needs to be resolved” (Taylor and Jennings, 2004, p. 11)

although they do not suggest how.

Although in my data ASTs presented their work as collegial and distant from monitoring, in contrast, in the school in special measures the ASTs were involved in monitoring alongside the senior management team. Here, outreach was seen as a luxury to be forgone at a time of emergency.

Everyone's lessons were being observed by the internal AST team, although the external AST was meeting some resistance. This is a similar experience to the hostility encountered by Helen as an outsider in a school in special measures. It suggests that staff had a sense of powerlessness and defensiveness towards solutions from outside experts. This is in line with the 'demonisation' of schools in special measures (Tomlinson 1997).

The second strategy, informal networking, here includes an entrepreneurial spirit in finding outreach and maintaining relationships. Fielding et al (2005) acknowledges the presence of entrepreneurship, although it is a minor point compared with its significance in my findings. I was surprised at the extent to which AST respondents in this study used their own informal networks and marketing ideas to set up outreach even when the local authority had provided an official matching system. This may imply that the local authority management is still not extensive enough or that schools don't put in enough requests because they don't understand outreach, or that teachers welcome the opportunity to take the initiative more.

There were local school tensions impacting on outreach and the autonomy enjoyed by some ASTs. One type of local limit was having enough timetable allocation for outreach, dependent on home school control as discussed in the last chapter. Another was difference in head teacher direction of AST outreach towards a school's social capital, for example to local primary schools, conferences or wherever the local authority or AST decided. The degree of autonomy might therefore reflect local conditions such as perceptions of hierarchy, competition and collaboration.

The findings discussed in this chapter can also be considered in relation to the amended AST professional standards which take effect from September 2007 and were subject to consultation in 2005/2006 (Appendix A). The changes to the 2007 standards and the consultation process are worthy of comment because I see dissonance between my findings and the proposals. The areas of disagreement in the light of my findings on collegiality are the enhanced leadership and evaluation aspects to the AST role. These

comments relate to first research question on the likely survival of the model.

The new grade of excellent teacher is very similar to the current duties of ASTs (Appendix A). This means more teachers might undertake AST type support activities in the home school. However, only ASTs, but not excellent teachers, are expected to do outreach or work *“beyond their own school”* according to the 2007 wording. This may indicate that outreach is too complicated or too expensive to manage. My comment is that this is a missed opportunity and in the recommendations in chapter 7, I suggest that ASTs could have a role in developing outreach-type activities for other staff members.

The 2007 standards state that AST work beyond the home school should be at leadership and strategic level and contribute to school improvement:

“ASTs should be ...part of or work closely with leadership teams taking a leadership role in developing, implementing and evaluating policies and practice in their own and other workplaces that contribute to school improvement”

(DfES 2007)

This brings the AST role to a different level from collegial peer to peer support. In my data and research period, ASTs were closer to middle leadership and this was part of their distinctive professional development. My view is that a senior leadership role might make it more difficult for ASTs to demonstrate collegiality. Instead they will face a new challenge of building capacity in others. The amendments provide a higher profile to ASTs as teacher leaders, and this opportunity should I argue be based on a recognition of the AST entrepreneurial qualities seen in this study.

In the draft consultation I welcomed the recognition that outreach requires skills of adapting, and – importantly – that the work is not context free.

“These standards should emphasise working in unfamiliar environments and in a range of different contexts, to

transfer and adapt methods from one situation to another and to work with a range of professional colleagues in different settings.” [DfES 2006, online]

However the reference to different contexts was dropped in the 2007 edition although it might be implied by the following wording in the standards:

“possess the analytical, interpersonal and organisational skills necessary to work effectively with staff and leadership teams beyond their own school.” [DfES 2007, online]

Other staff implies working with non-teachers, such as classroom assistants. There is a missed opportunity for specific reference to local area collaborative work or action research although researching curricular practice. It does not refer to how outreach work is generated or the role of the local authority compared to school priorities for outreach.

In the consultation phase, I was especially surprised to see: *“evaluating others’ teaching needs to be reflected.”* Based on my findings, evaluating may be taken as monitoring rather than supporting or developing. The wording was further amended to *“evaluating policies and practice”*, which sounds less personal but still has the same function. I predict that ASTs may have to undergo another settling-down period.

Leadership was not the main focus of this study, although I was aware of the teacher leader concept (Frost and Harris 2003), and had collected data on views of ASTs’ relationship to senior management. A clear difference between my data and the direction of policy was a division of views about whether or not ASTs should be part of senior leadership. I initially left these data out of the analysis as they did not add to the findings on outreach. They became relevant in the light of significant changes to role to the AST in the 2007 standards.

In my interview with the DfES, I was shown internal survey data on views of whether ASTs should become part of senior management. The results show a divide of views, as shown in Table 5.1. This data may have been

overtaken by other internal consultations since the time I collected it at interview.

Table 5.1 Consultation on the Professional Duties of Advanced Skills Teachers (source: DfES internal project report produced in January 2003, collected at interview January 2004).

Are there any reasons why ASTs should not be members of the school's senior management team? If so, please identify them:

	Total	
Yes	12	52%
No	11	48%
Contrary to role of AST	4	17%
Workload increase	4	17%
Could be useful	2	9%

I sought to check these data in my own questionnaire, and found more of a consensus against a senior management role. The difference might be explained in the composition of the respondents from the DfES, among whom were head teachers, LEA officers, and ASTs.

Table 5.2 Spring 2004 Survey (Appendix B, Research Instruments)

Q 10. Do you think ASTs should be part of the senior management team?

	Hillshire Conference	Rivershire Conference	Total
Yes	3	4	7
No	14	18	32
Don't know	1	3	4

The AST role generated fears when it was first proposed, but this may be part of the cycle of the implementation of change, and the above results may reflect a similar fear.

As part of my triangulation of head teacher perspectives on ASTs, I interviewed a head teacher in Rivershire on the recommendation of the local authority and the DfES. In this school the ASTs were being deployed as alternatives to heads of department because of their enthusiasm for learning. The view was that other staff could take on some of the administrative tasks so that ASTs could develop the innovation side. I saw this school as unusual because firstly it was a newly-built via private finance and secondly because the head had had time to develop the role of ASTs in a previous school of a similar innovative reputation. In other research, Bennett et al. (2006) developed a case study of a school where ASTs had been appointed to lead cross-curricular work and were well respected for their teaching and support.

Both these school cases were selected for being ahead of their time or untypical. It would be worthwhile to study how typical schools implement the new role of ASTs in senior leadership teams in a follow-up study. This level of leadership implies a cross-disciplinary and more generic role, and may include management of the other excellent teachers. It is potentially a radical move, but may be unpopular.

Chapter 6

How does outreach relate to other collaborative work?

Chapter Overview

This chapter considers other forms of outreach beyond one-to-one work. The potential of ASTs to become involved in group work, networking and collaborative inter-school work is considered in relation to emerging literature. A vignette describes examples of collaborative group work in Hillshire. The question of the role of the local authority is revisited in relation to collaborative work.

Outreach and other collaborative work

My assumption from the literature was that AST outreach was part of a series of policies promoting inter-school collaboration. I looked at the gaps between policy and practice with regard to AST outreach. By drawing on Fielding et al. (2005), especially the social relationships model, I was able to revisit my data on individual ASTs where networking and collegiality were part of the tool kit for entrepreneurial teachers. As seen in earlier chapters, outreach poses considerable challenges to the AST. In the home school, an AST would be a member of several teams, but in outreach, the AST works as an individual. Accordingly, there is all the more reason for the role of the local authority to include a support and development component, as discussed in chapter 4.

The AST working solo was not the only model. As part of the case study I also sought to research ASTs working in groups, teams, networks or communities. I hypothesised that this might provide examples of outreach explicitly strengthening other local partnerships or collaborative work. In this sample, such examples were limited. Where the local infrastructure is weak, I argue that local authorities do have a role in developing AST work beyond the solo model. The isolation of the role was noted by some ASTs as a disadvantage, whereas the opportunity to meet with other ASTs at

conferences and development events organized by the local authority was welcomed. I see AST meetings as a precondition for other collaborative work.

The vignette of Clive showed he was able to develop outreach through schools suggested by the local authority plus his own networks, and as part of outreach to make full use of personal contacts to put teachers from different schools in contact with one another. Other data showed the frustration of individual ASTs at the lack of opportunities for outreach. This negative finding is important because it might reflect that networking and collaboration between schools was limited, and that the LEA's role in trying to facilitate it was limited too. Clive and other Science ASTs in Hillshire also mentioned the importance of regular meetings and work with other ASTs.

In the literature review it has been seen that groups are not automatically communities of practitioners (Wenger 1998), nor are they necessarily an example of networking (Lieberman 2000; Veugelers & O'Hair 2005). AST groups are of interest because they reflect the potential of ASTs to contribute to networks and communities as a form of professional development.

An alternative line for investigation would have encompassed ASTs within electronic communities. I was expecting to gain access to electronic communities and networks to observe as an additional forum for observing ASTs, and I was interested in this professionally. I anticipated that such an electronic discussion forum might be a successful example of crossing the borders where ASTs might exchange experiences. During the research period, examples of other electronic professional communities for teachers were TeacherNet, Times Educational Supplement and National College for Headteachers. At the start of my research I learned there was an AST electronic forum run by the DfES, which then moved to the NCSL for hosting in an attempt to revive it. I failed to get access to the AST e-community despite contacting the facilitators of both organizations; they admitted that there was not much going on.

According to my data, most respondents had no experience of the AST e-conference, and those who had accessed the site gave up when there seemed to be little activity on it. In Riverside and Hillshire, the more important factors were local opportunities to meet face-to-face. This compares with my own professional experience of national electronic teacher communities, where the e-environment appealed to some teachers but was generally underused by potential participants, and was not the medium of choice for CPD.

Other collaborative work also relates to the local authority. In this study they represent one type of geographical and administrative border for ASTs, and their role in funding, supporting and coordinating ASTs impacts on outreach. Hillshire and Rivershire had been early adopters of the AST scheme. Both local authorities recognized that the evaluation of AST work also needed to be underpinned by appropriate support, professional development and induction. I noted some minor differences in how Hillshire and Rivershire organized their AST support. Hillshire had one local authority officer to organize the funding, recruitment and evaluation of ASTs, and in addition a separate officer (a part-time consultant and former advisor), to organize the training, meetings and support. In Rivershire, both functions were carried out by a single officer. Rivershire was working with other neighbouring authorities to provide joint professional development at annual conferences with outside speakers. The ASTs found this helpful, according to my survey data.

I found two types of AST collaborative work, and both were closely associated with the local authority. These consisted of deployment to schools in special measures, as well as groups of ASTs leading on specific projects, which is illustrated through a vignette.

Local authority deployment of ASTs to schools in special measures

From a local authority perspective, deploying ASTs into schools in challenging circumstances or special measures could be seen as an efficient

use of resources towards the strategic improvement of schools in the authority. It was reported positively in several places (Taylor & Jennings 2004). This deployment was not always viewed positively by ASTs. From an AST perspective, it might be uncomfortable and could present a challenging outreach experience for the AST, as seen in chapter 1. This difference in perspective emerged early on in the fieldwork.

Hillshire reported that recruiting ASTs was meeting a real need following a cost-cutting period when the local advisory team had been depleted. Their policy was to try to balance out the placements and not focus solely on schools in difficulty. Rivershire reported the AST input into schools as having had a positive effect both on morale and standards, including on one school that had attracted a great deal of negative press attention. I was not able to follow this up with access to recipient perspectives, but I learned that some schools in Rivershire had closed and then reopened.

These issues are reflected in an early Ofsted report (Ofsted 2001):

“Consideration needs to be given to what is an appropriate balance between work identified by the LEA and the preferences of an individual AST and their school.”

Another key decision and variation among LEAs was the appropriate number and duration of interventions in a school in special measures for relationship building:

“Whereas some local authorities sought to limit the length of an AST contact with a particular school to one term, others saw long-term involvement as both less threatening and more effective” (Bennett et al. 2006).

Some local authorities outside this sample had sent groups of ASTs to schools in special measures and had tried to pair up departments. (Source: DfES internal document).

According to Fielding et al. (2005), partnership and pairing among schools in similar circumstances is more successful for developing trust than when it occurs among schools in dissimilar circumstances. However, I would suggest that more research is needed on different models. I also suggest that there may also be differences between schools in urban and other areas

(Woods et al. 2006), especially where prior funding has started to encourage collaboration.

There were suggestions from conferences and interview data that outreach work needs to be balanced. Exposure only to the emergency model, for instance in relation to schools in special measures or weak teachers, was not enough, because outreach work with strong teachers was also needed for the ASTs' own professional development. I saw this as an area ripe for further investigation, and also as something of a minefield. This finding seemed to stand apart from the other data on reciprocity and collegiality, because it implied that the benefits of outreach were not always two-way. It also suggested that it might be difficult for the AST in a low-status school to shake off the reputation of the school, even though they had the same accreditation. I was struck by the remark of one AST in a new-start school, formerly in special measures, that *"most of the other ASTs had done theirs [assessments] in nice schools."* (Elizabeth, AST, January 2006). I understood *nice schools* to mean schools that had achieved external measures of high status/high results, and subjective views of nicely-behaved pupils who were not disaffected. Did this reflect deeper divisions and issues of recruitment in schools in special measures, as seen in the Rivershire vignette? It seemed that in local contexts, not only was *who you knew* important, but also where you came from. I would have liked to have had some data on ASTs from schools in challenging circumstances being sent to higher-status schools, but did not set out to collect corresponding data.

I was excited about the need to further investigate ASTs in schools in special measures or challenging circumstances, and needed more data. A DfES letter to head teachers aimed to help increase the recruitment of ASTs to schools in challenging circumstances with extra funding:

"We have found that there are excellent classrooms in all schools but that teachers in schools facing challenging circumstances often feel that because the school is not doing as well as other schools that they themselves are not skilled practitioners. We have found that teachers like those in your school are committed and experienced and are more than capable of taking up the challenge of raising

teacher and learner standards. ... I hope that your school will accept the challenge and apply for AST posts."

I tried to obtain further data by sending an email to the DfES inquiring about numbers in relation to the types of schools where ASTs were based, but the relevant information had not been kept. One possible avenue might have been to look at local authority data on the frequency of outreach in different types of schools, but this was different from the qualitative views on assumptions about teaching in nice schools. Was this in any way linked to early associations of ASTs in special schools initially being feared as elitist (Sutton et al. 2000; Ofsted 2001), but later part of the secondary landscape?

I was not satisfied that this lead could not be followed up, although I understood that the existence of unexplained categories was one of the frustrations of research:

"one of the particular strengths of qualitative research is its capacity to identify the unexpected and illuminate the odd... Qualitative research can raise important if uncomfortable questions about the deepest assumptions and the most taken for granted perceptions"

(Hargreaves 1994, p. 182).

Through this research I aimed to expose and challenge assumptions about other contexts through outreach. For example, in the recommendations section I note the need to have flexibility of outreach time that corresponds to individual projects. This came from my researcher awareness of different models of local authority deployment of ASTs outside my sample. This included clusters of schools working in highly collaborative urban contexts where the ASTs were undertaking 100% outreach and retained a home school base (Woods et al. 2006, p. 42).

The other aspect of local authority work was supporting ASTs through networking opportunities. This is illustrated by a positive example of AST groups in Hillshire.

Vignette: Collaborative model of AST Science Groups in Hillshire

The Science ASTs in Hillshire showed a strong sense of belonging to a science teacher group beyond their own school. The importance of this group was referred to in several interviews of Hillshire Science ASTs. Sandra summed up the impact as *“like having your own department but across the county.”* This indicates an identification beyond the school border, and it might reflect knowledge sharing or a knowledge community, as discussed in networking literature (Veugelers & O’Hair 2005).

I selected Hillshire for the observation of AST group work because there were multiple data sources. I found three separate examples of ASTs operating in different types of AST groups.

I traced Hillshire’s group work to a 2002 DfES-sponsored pilot. Hillshire local authority was one of six local authorities involved in the pilot to assess the benefits and difficulties of AST group work, as opposed to working alone. This involved groups of subject ASTs working collaboratively to support whole departments at a time. According to documentation provided by the DfES and by Hillshire, the project focus was on Science, Humanities and MFL groups. The factors contributing to success were seen as regular meetings, improved communications, reduction in the sense of isolation, and reference to improved SATS scores. The difficulties were reported to be time and planning issues related to the lack of a common timetable, the need for a coordinator, and the uncoordinated allocation of outreach days.³ Although the funding for the pilot work had not continued, the three subject groups of ASTs maintained strong links and continued to meet to plan other collaborative work. I focused only on the Science group.

Hillshire and Rivershire both provided annual conferences for ASTs, and Hillshire provided termly meetings for ASTs at a local authority teachers’

³ Source: Hillshire internal document, AST Group Working to Support Departmental Improvement

centre. The Science ASTs met as a group in formal meeting slots funded by the local authority. In analysing data from the Hillshire Science ASTs, the importance of the mutual support provided by the AST Science group emerged strongly, although respondents were not aware of the national project. One project emerging from the connections made at the Science group led to two Science ASTs from neighbouring schools deciding there was a need to find out why there were so many different types of data-logging software in schools. Mike was the project manager overseeing the pilot project of testing in different schools.

“There are about seven or eight different types. We said perhaps it would be better if there were only one or two and to bulk-buy stuff. Then obviously the council gets a decent discount. We would say then as ASTs we’d be really happy to support this technology or this one... What we did was get in contact with all the main data logging suppliers, we brought them all together in the school and all the ASTs were there, and we assessed which two to go for. They said they’ve never seen that before, they were quite threatened by it I think.” (Mike, AST, January 2005).

The commercial suppliers had to deal with the ASTs as a group with purchasing power instead of approaching individual schools. This could be seen as an example of innovative collaborative and knowledge-sharing work, and a new way of working.

Apart from meeting amongst themselves as ASTs, Science ASTs also took on a role of running professional development and meetings for other science teachers. For example, a key project was running annual conferences for all science teachers across the authority. This is a similar network to one described in a TES article (O’Grady 2003). The AST work was to bring in speakers of interest to science teachers as part of their professional updating. This seemed significant as a model because it demonstrated distributed leadership among the ASTs, and the commitment of Hillshire local authority to funding professional development. A positive view of the science conferences would be that they served to further develop links and foster opportunities for networking. The groups could also be

seen as a revamped version of former heads-of-department meetings which would have been run by advisory teachers.

Discussion of findings in this chapter

The findings in this chapter relate to the fourth research question on how outreach relates to other collaborative work. Collaboration has been an element in the framework used to analyse outreach. The conception of outreach also includes work between ASTs. The potential benefit moves beyond individual teachers and individual institutions, to a much wider group of other teachers and schools in a community or network.

The science group in Hillshire has been analysed as a positive illustration of the potential of ASTs to belong to networks and communities. The word ‘potential’ is used to acknowledge the limits of this study in testing the models of community or networks as outlined in the literature chapter (Wenger 1998; Libermann 2000; Hargreaves D. 2003). The AST might be seen as well placed to lead research and development work and bring together common interests. For example, the science group collaboratively researching software resources shows a form of teacher action research.

This sort of work has potential for further development. It is appealing where it leads to the economy-of-scale-based purchasing of resources. According to Handscomb (2004), such an example of collaboration combined with enquiry is just the sort of evidence-based practice which should be developed.

The fourth research question required taking into consideration the role of the local authority in supporting outreach.

The local authority context, including the demise of advisory teachers, is part of the answer concerning why ASTs were introduced at local level. During the research period, ASTs were not the only professionals working across school boundaries in Hillshire. There were also strategy consultants visiting schools who were managed by the local authority. They did not form part of my sample, but this raised the question of whether they had a

different role. One AST from outside this sample summed up the difference in terms of autonomy and creativity: *“they [the strategy consultants] have to follow the script... we don’t”*. This might mean that there was a strong focus on centralised curricula where collegiality might be a thinly-disguised way of imposing a centralised agenda.

The example of the Hillshire Science ASTs running networking meetings for other science teachers across the area could be compared to the older model involving local authority advisory teachers. Hillshire is a large county, and bringing together all the science teachers needed organization and resources. According to the local authority officer, cost saving and the demise of the advisory team were part of the rationale for supporting ASTs.

Issues of cost and the sustainability of central funding were raised in both Hillshire and Rivershire. For example, I compared the DfES report on group work, provided at interview, with Hillshire documents on group work. Although both were positive about its value, there were also concerns over the sustainability of funding for group work and the amount of time needed for coordination to enable ASTs to work together in teams. On one level it is an operational issue affecting collaboration, but it also represents a constraint which is little touched on in the literature on collaboration. For example, a different sample might have found other multiple funding priorities such as urban areas of collaboration (Woods et al. 2006).

I looked across Science and English respondents in both authorities for common issues. Hillshire is portrayed here as having a stronger group collaboration around the Science ASTs. In contrast, English groups did not display the same strong group sense, and were more likely to express frustration at insufficient outreach. Rivershire had not taken part in the DfES group work pilot project, which might have been a factor. Also, the choice of the Hillshire groups was made partly for reasons of access and convenience. In Rivershire I was hoping to investigate one area with a strong area identity and a history of secondary-school collaboration, but despite several attempts it was not possible to gain access to this group.

Although local authorities were seen as important in initiating and

sustaining AST networks, they were not the only stakeholders. Another stakeholder was the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, formerly the Specialist School Trust. For example, I came across two examples of references to AST outreach work enhancing the status of the school especially because it had a specialist status to maintain. One example was an AST attending a trust conference to represent the school, and the other was helping the school organise a public lecture programme. Both ASTs referred to the obligation to report to the trust, and one reported that AST outreach work was counted both locally and nationally. In these examples, my working explanation was that the ASTs had dual accountability to the local authority and to the school because of its specialist status. Without an in-depth follow-up of each case it was difficult to know if the dual accountability was complementary or in conflict.

The late finding about specialist schools is relevant to AST outreach and my findings on informal networks, because it might imply that some schools are left out of collaboration if they are not in such networks. The background to the introduction of specialist schools in England is controversial because of their links to private sponsorship and the criticisms of the marketization of schools. The introduction of academies to the secondary sector has been similarly controversial, and academies are now aligned with the trust. Woods, Woods & Gunter (2007) and Bell & West (2003) suggest that the existence of competitive pressures within local authority markets appear to hamper co-operation among local schools. Other studies found that specialist schools were part of “*the policy of secondary diversity*” (Woods et al. 2006).

The involvement in the trust of developing subject specialisms was seen in the way they organized several national subject conferences for ASTs. I emailed a conference organizer who said that the trust saw ASTs as an important part of building networks of professional development. This was the limit of the comparison I could make, but I noted that an alternative study might have included the SSAT as a stakeholder for ASTs.

I related this back to the issue of social capital in outreach. A key issue in collaboration is whether it consists of one-way giving or a two-way

development of new work. From a home school point of view, having an AST might be a recruitment tool, and may be related to a school's social capital as enhancing the reputation of the school regardless of its starting point. However, outreach brings to the fore the tension ASTs are placed under as a result of being employed by both the school and the local authority. Operating solo, ASTs might find their own outreach work through friends down the road, but operating outreach via the local authority's matching system might involve a far wider distribution, and schools in very different status, in order to meet wider strategic objectives of area-wide improvement.

Outreach practice has been unexplored and underconceptualised, and analysis has been especially lacking in relation to local contextual factors. Moving away from the findings, I comment that ASTs and headteachers could do more to recognise the potential of outreach. One idea would be to map ASTs and teacher networks, including home school local authority, specialist school trust and informal contact; such a map could be a useful tool for wider school development. Many of the skills needed for outreach might be invisible, but there is scope for ASTs to take a lead role in networking, community building and action research, and in making the benefits of such contacts more widely known.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Chapter Overview

This chapter reviews the findings of my dissertation in relation to the research questions, makes tentative recommendations to different audiences, and concludes with an overview of the factors influencing outreach and the implications of the findings for policy and practice.

The impact of the doctorate on my own professional development

My professional role before and during the doctorate work has given me access to many different schools within and outside the UK. This has enabled me to reflect on variations in context among schools of all kinds: rural, urban, popular, in special measures, average, award-winning, small, large, some primary (though mainly secondary), some hostile towards professional development, and others embracing it and developing their own local models. Indeed, it was noticing these local context variations that generated the impetus for investigating how ASTs would negotiate the different territories in outreach and what would help or hinder them. Schools are far from homogeneous, and AST policy needs to take account of this.

Being a doctorate student has helped me to develop my research skills, particularly with regard to gaining access to respondents and re-evaluating my theories as I progress. The experience has generated a strong sense of commitment to the topic and some impact on my own career planning.

Summary of findings

As is argued in the introduction, an investigation of Advanced Skills Teachers (or ASTs) was needed because there was little empirical work to indicate how the role was operating in practice since its introduction in 1998. The particular focus of this study was on outreach work in the

secondary sector, where ASTs supported teachers in schools other than their own. Early reports indicated that outreach was a problematic part of the AST role, and my interest lay in finding out if and why that might be the case in specific local settings.

In undertaking a critical investigation of the literature, it became apparent that more was known about collaboration within schools than collaboration between schools, and that less still was known about the processes and issues for practitioners. In order to frame the study concerning how ASTs experienced outreach, I drew on the literature on collaboration, reflective practice and school context.

The study has yielded the qualitative equivalent of a snapshot of a policy in time. It is presented as case study based on ASTs from a sample of two English shire local authorities between 2003 and 2006, by which time the policy might be expected to have settled. The focus was on ASTs in two local authorities, narrowed further to Science and English ASTs.

Q1. Why were ASTs introduced?

The first research question considered why ASTs were introduced, with sub-questions to investigate the key features of the national policy context and the local contexts. Related to this was the question of how likely the AST model was to survive in its present form. All three questions are regarded as overlapping, and are discussed in chapters 1 and 2 with regard to policy, and chapters 4, 5, 6 with local illustrations.

The recent history of UK secondary school reforms relates to the “why” question. Many of the national reform themes of accountability, local training, private finance and performance-related pay were also related to modernisation in other public sector reforms. A key education policy was the focus on raising standards: ASTs would be recognised for their excellence in teaching. Other relevant national policy factors included the shift to initial teacher training based in schools, with direct funding to train new teachers where this might historically have been the domain of higher education. Another national factor was an increasingly diverse secondary

sector. For example, although comprehensive schools were introduced in the UK in the 1960s, an overseas visitor to the UK in 2006 might also need to distinguish between secondary schools within the maintained sector, which could be a grammar school, a secondary modern school, a specialist school, an academy, a leading edge school, a special school, an extended school or some combination. This is the background to the local schools context and inter-school context in which the ASTs had to negotiate the new territory of outreach. I link policies to promote school collaboration with the ASTs' outreach activity through their remit to spread good practice.

Chapters 1 and 2 trace responses in press reports and inspection reports, and this is later compared with interview statements made by officials at the DfES. The findings as to why ASTs were introduced at local level come from data supplied by local authorities, head teachers and ASTs. I also consider the AST practitioner viewpoints, including reasons for becoming an AST. Often this was simply in order to be rewarded for what they loved doing, and to maintain their enthusiasm for teaching. This is discussed in chapter 4, where becoming an AST is described as a source of personal pride that builds on professional values.

In contrast, I found that both the local authorities and head teachers saw ASTs as a resource for both school and area-wide improvement. For local authorities, the decision to take up central funding for ASTs was to do with resource shortages, with the ASTs taking on some LA-directed work which might previously have been done by advisory teachers. Examples are ASTs being sent to work in schools in special measures as part of their outreach time and ASTs running conferences for heads of department. I argue that ASTs are different from local authority employees because they identify with their home school base. This is an aspect of their peer credibility, but may also lead to competing demands.

The AST data and some head teacher data indicated why ASTs were introduced at local school level. Some ASTs were critical of head teachers for introducing ASTs purely as a retention device or status symbol if they were not given sufficient autonomy to develop their role. At the other end of

the scale, some head teachers saw ASTs as being the drivers of change in their institutions.

The national context for ASTs was also of interest, because the national standards for ASTs were under consultation in 2006. This was especially relevant to the sub-question of how likely ASTs were to survive in their present form. I argue that there will be a further period of settling down (Fullan 2001). My findings do not support the recommended shift of ASTs from middle to senior managers. The impact of this change could form the basis of a future research topic.

Q2. What is outreach?

The second question relates to the findings in chapter 4, and chapter 6 discusses AST group work. Although outreach work can be broadly categorised as supporting other teachers, there was no typical illustration of how this might be carried out. The only thing that was typical was the wide range of what counted as outreach. Outreach could vary in how it was arranged: via local authority matching systems, via individual informal networks, via local school partnerships such as with feeder primary schools, or via specialist school networks. The type of activity and audience ranged from observation and co-teaching in another classroom to formal training sessions at a local teachers' centre support delivered to a whole department, and from intensive pupil tuition to representing the school at a conference.

The finding that there was such a wide range of activity was an important starting point in the analysis. I had to revise my preconception that outreach might be similar to mentoring, although this might be a relevant comparison for some parts of the work. Such a range might reflect an *ad hoc* approach and difficulties in progressing to reflective and critical practice. I argue that different activities represent different degrees of comfort and difficulty for the AST. For example, activities within a comfortable zone might be preparation and sharing of resources versus the discomfort of teaching and managing behaviour in an unfamiliar school. This relates to themes of challenge and critical enquiry in the literature. For example, Harland (1990)

describes providing resources and demonstrations as easy for advisory teachers, but not necessarily leading teachers to internalised change.

Data on outreach from ASTs, stakeholders and school evaluations included perceptions of the reported benefits and challenges of the role. Benefits for ASTs included renewed professional enthusiasm and recognition that legitimised their practice and creativity. By coming into contact with different school contexts and different teachers at different stages, it also made them more reflective about their own teaching. One finding, which was cited as both a benefit and a challenge, was increased autonomy. Some ASTs saw autonomy as a benefit of the role and were able to undertake a range of outreach activities compared to other ASTs whose timetables were restricted and consequently expressed frustration at their lack of autonomy. AST respondents had contacts with other local ASTs and had a sense of which head teachers in a given geographical area gave greater or lesser permission for outreach.

Some difficulties of outreach were outlined in contemporary reports (Ofsted 2003; Taylor & Jennings 2004). Through my chosen methodology of case studies of ASTs in different contexts, my findings confirm and provide further local explanations for some of these operational problems, such as: collecting evaluation data; time for outreach; finding outreach, and concerns about funding. A minority of ASTs expressed doubts about the sustainability of their impact. A further challenge of outreach had to do with its invisibility, and a perception from other staff that it was a form of “swanning off” (Homer, AST, November 2004). I analyse this as one of several indicators that collaborative work between schools is still in its infancy. These difficulties reflect wider themes in the literature concerning professional development and collaboration. In outreach, many ASTs were operating in a solo mode rather than as part of a planned local collaboration.

Q3. How do ASTs work with other professionals in other contexts across school boundaries?

This question is considered in chapters 4 and 5. From the findings, I theorised that ASTs used a toolkit, building on existing informal networks.

A key finding was that ASTs described their approach to supporting other teachers in terms of collegiality. In particular, they were keen to move away from the unhelpful “superteacher” press label, or the perception that they were acting as judgemental inspectors. This was a running joke in one school: “*Here comes Billy Whizz in his cape.*” Although a collegial approach might have been expected in an internal home school context, the finding that this could be extended to unfamiliar colleagues was surprising. Also surprising was the fact that ASTs saw the outreach work as generally yielding two-way benefits. This relates to Fielding et al.’s (2005) findings on trust and joint property development. It also relates to shared knowledge ideas in literature on distributed leadership (Frost & Harris 2003; Harris & Muijs 2003) and networks (Veugelers & O’Hair 2005; Libermann 2000)

A related finding was that ASTs tended to play down or demystify their role and admit to making mistakes. They are not behaving as superteachers. One AST adjusted her demonstration lessons to the outreach colleague. I associate this with key ideas drawn from reflective practice and Berliner’s (1993) notion of experts as self-critical. The reflective-practice framework also relates to the issue of how to make implicit skills become explicit.

The fact of the ASTs’ use of informal networks to find outreach work was an important finding in which it emerged that they used contacts with friends, colleagues and school partners for this purpose. This relates to the question concerning the role of the local authority, because it suggested that official local authority matching systems only accounted for some of the work. Explanations for this gap might have been the operation of supply and demand, the newness of the role, or funding. Although this study considered the role of the local authorities towards ASTs, an alternative perspective might have been the role of the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, since by the end of the research period this was becoming an important national player with its own networks and funding (Woods, Woods and Gunter 2007).

ASTs also referred to “getting known” and building up a local reputation, for example through proactive mailing or specific requests for help which suggested that the trust they enjoyed was important. My analysis is that,

despite a discourse of collaboration and sharing good practice at national level, the local authorities were limited in setting up administrative infrastructures for AST outreach. Similarly at school level, collaboration with feeder primary schools was easier than working with competing secondary schools. Despite these issues the data showed that ASTs forged their own informal links, and I speculate that these could have been further developed for the benefit of schools.

One of the concepts underpinning collaboration and networking is a redistribution of knowledge resources. The findings on how ASTs worked with colleagues in schools of differing or equal status and differing ethos was more mixed. I acknowledge Fielding et al.'s (2005) view that partnerships between equal partners work best, but would argue that this needs further exploration. In my findings, local authority officers saw ASTs as being freely able to transcend school differences (e.g. grammar school to urban comprehensive). In contrast, ASTs were more likely to report that such crossing-over required sensitivity, or that the movement was one-way. There might have been examples of primary ASTs coming to secondary schools on outreach, but in the sample of this study the movement was one-way. In response to this early finding, my sample included some ASTs based in schools in challenging circumstance. I hypothesized that the more frequent outreach pattern was high-status school to low-status school rather than the other way around, but I was not able to access sufficient data to test this. I would recommend this as an area for further research, as it might reflect ASTs carrying with them the status of the school rather than being seen on their own merits. Conceptually, this is related to notions of social capital and the sociology of education on structural differences, as discussed in chapter 2.

Q4. How does AST outreach relate to other collaborative work?

The findings for this question relate to chapter 6. This question does not refer to other collaborative work undertaken in a home school by an AST – although this might be a valid comparison – but collaborative work among several ASTs in a geographical area beyond one-to-one outreach. For Sandra, an AST in Hillshire, the opportunity to meet and work with other

science teachers and science ASTs was *“like having your own department, but across the county.”*

In chapter 4, the section on local authority contexts relate to the sub-question of the role of the local authority. In chapter 6 this is compared with the influence of other stakeholders such as the Specialist School and Academies Trust. I argue that the role of the local authority in promoting networks of ASTs and group work should be maintained and developed. Although many ASTs showed determination in finding outreach despite the difficulties they encountered, some of the work could only be arranged through a strategic approach. For example, Belinda’s activities referred to outreach work involving a team of ASTs in secondary schools in a neighbouring authority in special measures that was having teacher recruitment problems.

My findings on group work and collaborative work indicate that although AST outreach might often be a solo enterprise, it also has the potential to become part of a more strategic vision. I acknowledge that this question was influenced by my working as a researcher on another study about school collaboration (Woods et al. 2006). In the areas with the strongest local collaborative work, the contexts were urban and geographically compact, the external funding was significant and sustainable, and ASTs played a key role in working with an agreed number of schools.

The findings were that both the Rivershire and Hillshire ASTs were involved in collaborative work in teams and groups. A potential vignette would have focused on a Hillshire cluster of schools with a history of working collaboratively for several decades, but it was not possible to gain adequate access. In chapter 6, three examples of AST group work in Rivershire are outlined. Rivershire local authority took a deliberate decision to allow developmental time for ASTs to meet. In some subjects this had been extended to a DfES-funded project on sending teams of ASTs to work on outreach. This might be desirable, but is/was resource-dependent, and is connected with other problems regarding the sustaining of networks and projects. The experience of working together led to other projects and connections. An interesting one was ASTs taking the lead on action research

and enquiry, and I include this in the recommendations. Rivershire group work also included ASTs being involved in networks of subject teachers. This was particularly strong in Science but not in all subjects, and I relate this to the additional funding provided by the DfES to Hillshire and other local authorities outside this sample to encourage the group working of ASTs.

Although I found examples of groups of ASTs and local teachers working together according to the literature on communities of practice, I interpreted this with caution, since not all groups were necessarily communities of practice, and might be informal rather than formal. The literature on collaboration often viewed it uncritically or in ideal terms. Instead, I see the AST groups as offering potential for further development, especially for local action research and teacher networks, subject to resources. There was insufficient data on electronic communities of ASTs, and the national e-discussion forum was underused. Again, this suggested the importance of local relationships and having trust concerning where the knowledge came from.

Recommendations

It was beyond the remit of this research to take account of the ranges of AST pay scales, age distributions, application trends or funding, although I acknowledge that these will be a factor in any recommendations. Since my findings are not conclusive, I have been cautious about over-claiming on the basis of a restricted sample, especially as I did not set out to evaluate the AST role. The following recommendations are based on the data. Further suggestions which go beyond the data in this study are indicated by an asterisk, *.

Areas for further research

1. Impact of amended professional standards for ASTs from 2007: how is the AST role changed? How is the balance of monitoring work

and collegiality maintained? Does outreach link with school development plan or individual informal contacts?

2. Action research: pilot and develop training materials for new ASTs and new excellent teachers, taking account of local contexts. Outcomes could include practical tools such as how to map networks or develop outreach in stages, or be based around the study and application of theoretical models on reflective practitioner or adult learning.
3. Pilot research on ASTs leading inter-school clusters to decide outreach priorities jointly. *
4. International comparisons. *

Recommendations to ASTs

1. Celebrate and publicise the advisory and liaison skills of outreach work as a school-wide benefit. ASTs in outreach are breaking new ground similarly to explorers and inventors, because this is a new aspect of the teaching role. Unexpected outcomes are not necessarily failures but are part of the process of being a reflective practitioner, and represent an opportunity to challenge stereotypes about good and bad schools.
2. Explore potential outreach links for strategic school partnerships, school clusters, exchanges and networks. For example, set up small-scale outreach for other staff, including Excellent Teachers or Teaching Assistants, and consider ways to share cases of classroom projects.*
3. A strength of ASTs has been a peer-to-peer supportive style and the building-up of trust. There is also a place for challenge and critical enquiry. This is not the same as formal monitoring, and a balance will need to be struck.*
4. Seek resources and time to work with other local ASTs on action research projects of benefit to the area. For example, develop tools to distinguish between different types of outreach work.
5. Consider joint work with universities to lead school research on lessons of past CPD, models of reflective practice, or mentoring.

Recommendations to head teachers

1. Outreach work has professional development benefits for the AST and is likely to have spin-off benefits for other staff.* Outreach requires confidentiality and trust. The skills go far beyond good teaching and are more akin to leadership skills, including motivating colleagues, networking, training, consultancy, project management and action research; these should be developed and valued.
2. The ASTs' 20% outreach time must be protected, because they can achieve more in a whole day than in a part of a day. Allowing flexibility for more or less than 20% outreach should be considered, depending on local project needs. Sustained outreach work may have more impact than several one-off activities. Some school clusters employ peripatetic ASTs for 100% outreach. *
3. ASTs are in a unique position of trust in terms of their ability to contribute to staff development and action research. Use of AST time for formal monitoring may undermine this, and a balance needs to be struck.
4. ASTs might develop other staff through outreach contacts and wider networks. Consider involving ASTs in joint work with universities, such as school research on past lessons of CPD, models of reflective practice, or mentoring.

Recommendations to policymakers

1. Resources are needed for local authorities or clusters of schools specifically for AST network development and AST leadership development. This will build up collaborative infrastructure. For example, ASTs can develop strategic local links between schools and lead collaborative projects for area-wide benefits above and beyond any benefits to individual home schools.
2. Publish and disseminate examples of innovative AST work within and between schools in a variety of local contexts. Clarify guidelines for schools and ASTs on balancing school needs and developing individual contacts.

3. Collect and analyse data on types of AST home schools and outreach schools, including schools in challenging circumstances.
4. Pilot and develop tools to distinguish between different types of outreach work, taking into account degrees of difficulty and contexts. Clarify what should not be counted as outreach.
5. Review impact of ASTs on senior management team from 2007.
Formal monitoring duties may be in conflict with collegiality except where distributed leadership has been established.*
6. Review subject focus for ASTs, and consider more generic roles.*

Implications of findings

In this final discussion, I move away from the findings into a more speculative mode on the implications of the findings. In hindsight, it would have been a good idea to take pictures of the research process. This would have charted the story of how I spent four years studying Advanced Skills Teachers and outreach, a policy which is about to change in 2007. My favourite images would have been the visit to the DfES offices in London and the visit to the chicken shed. These two extremes represent the policy perspective and the practitioner perspective. Throughout the thesis I have tried to achieve a good balance between each. I knew that it was not enough to present one view without the other, or to be overly promotional or critical.

When I told interested people about my topic a common reaction was, “Isn’t the AST scheme going to be phased out?” The DfES denied this, but the perception may have been due to the uncertainty about changes to funding and the scope of the role. As discussed, the introduction in 2007 of new standards may change the role further, especially in relation to ASTs’ promotion to the leadership teams. One advantage might be greater leverage for developing capacity in other staff and whole-school projects. A disadvantage might be a possible loss of collegiality and a loss of the informal support role if there is an emphasis on more formal monitoring. The new standards could be an opportunity for distributed leadership and integrating AST work with wider school development, although this is not specified in the standards.

Another reaction was, “Isn’t the AST just like the old advisory teacher or the key stage strategy consultants?” Again, my answer is “no”, because my evidence suggests that AST work is quite distinctive, and that they represent a new solution to some old problems. They are home-based but have the benefits of exposure to other people and ideas. In studies of CPD the importance of external agents is recognised. The AST role offers unique opportunities for peer credibility, for creative licence, and for the potential to stimulate further networks and action research, as seen in chapter 6. ASTs have been too modest about the work and skills involved in establishing outreach, which has tended to be invisible and undervalued. Instead, there is a need for recognition for their achievements in outreach. This does not mean breaking confidentiality codes but considering outreach as extending the role of the teacher, and as a way to break down traditional norms of isolation.

Some of the *ad hoc* nature of outreach is surprising and suggests it is not being seen as a benefit to the school or local area. This is addressed in the recommendations. I also suggest that some of the theoretical models of effective professional development, reflective practice, and developing collaboration and networks, could be usefully studied.

There was still some negative association with AST outreach as belonging to a deficit model for teachers or schools in difficulties. AST in schools in special measures or challenging circumstances were less likely to go on outreach, and this seemed to represent a limitation and a missed opportunity to challenge stereotypes. I would have liked more data on the experiences of ASTs from schools in challenging circumstances in gaining access to higher-status schools. ASTs from high-status schools who undertook outreach in such a deficit model found it to be a critical incident. I recommend that ASTs find some way of capturing critical incidents as part of their reflective practice and possible case histories. Similarly, there is potential for ASTs to take more ownership of the evaluation of their activities, which is currently seen as an administrative prerogative of the local authority, for example through developing tools and guidelines for other teachers.

ASTs did not want to be seen to be evaluating the work of other teachers, and had found ways to establish rapport and trust. The use of collegiality by ASTs was like a passport that enabled them to cross boundaries. ASTs were aware that imposed, rather than negotiated, outreach might meet with resistance. Collegiality worked both ways, as schools needed to know who they were getting.

At the end of the research I remain positive about the potential of AST work, although I am concerned about external restrictions impacting on the ASTs' potential to develop the work. This relates to much wider problems, namely "*the limits of local agency to challenge structural inequalities.*" (Whitty 2002, p. 13) Outreach is indeed a challenge but most ASTs relished this. Some informants suggested that ASTs were ahead of their time. "*When we look back we will see ASTs as trailblazers.*" (Rivershire) and similarly: "*ASTs are in the vanguard and that is never a comfortable place to be.*" (DfES) Indeed, many ASTs demonstrated a variety of skills through outreach, suggesting a potential for opening up schools and crossing borders.

References

Arnold, R. (2006) *Schools in collaboration: federations, collegiates and partnerships*, EMIE report, [Online] Available from: <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/emie/> (Accessed 7 August 2006).

Ball, S. (1987) *The micropolitics of the school*, London, Methuen.

Barber, M. (2003) *The modernisation of the teaching profession*, National College for School Leadership, [Online] Available from: <http://www.ncsl.org.uk/indexcfm?/auth-barber5> (Accessed 5 February 2003).

Bassey, M. (1999) *Case study research in educational settings*, Buckingham, Open University Press.

Bell, K. and West, A. (2003) 'Specialist Schools: an exploration of competition and co-operation', *Educational Studies*, 29 (2/3), pp. 273-289.

Bennett, N., Crawford, M. and Riches, C. (eds.) (1992) *Managing change in education: individual and organizational perspectives*, London, Open University/Paul Chapman.

Bennett, N., Wise, C. Woods, P. A. and Newton, W. (2003a) 'Leading from the middle: a review and analysis of evidence', Unpublished paper presented at *BERA*, Edinburgh, September 11-13 2003.

Bennett, N., Cooper, D., Wise, C., McDonald-Pearce, P. and Sutton, A. (2006) *Final report on the Advanced Skills Teachers research project*, National College for School Leadership, forthcoming.

Berliner, D. (1993) 'Teacher expertise', in Moon, B. and Shelton-Mayes, A. (eds.), *Teaching and learning in the secondary school*, London, Routledge.

Bernier, N. R. and McClelland, A. E. (1989) 'The social context of professional development' in Holly, M. L. and McLoughlin, C. S. (eds), *Perspectives on teacher professional development*, Lewes, Falmer Press.

Blake, D., Hannley, V., Jennings, M. and Lloyd, M. (2000) 'Teachers reflecting on careers in teaching in the secondary school', unpublished paper presented at *BERA*, Cardiff, September 2000.

Bolam, R. and Weindling, D. (2006) *Final report: synthesis of recent policy research and evaluation projects concerned with capacity building through teachers' professional development*, General Teaching Council, [Online] Available from:
<http://www.gtce.org.uk/shared/contentlibs/126795/93128/168771/report.pdf>
(Accessed 27 July 2006).

Brighouse, T. (2005) 'Tackling disadvantage, disaffection and underachievement' in Wragg, T. (ed.) *Letters to the Prime Minister: the future of education*, London, New Vision Group.

Brown, G. (1989) 'The changing face of INSET: a view from a university department of education' in McBride, R. (ed.) *The in-service training of teachers*, Lewes, Falmer Press.

Bruce, J., Calhoun, E. and Hopkins, D. (1997) *Models of learning - tools for teaching*, Buckingham, Open University Press.

Burgess, H. (1985) 'Case study and curriculum research: some issues for teacher researchers', in Burgess, R. (ed.) *Issues in educational research: qualitative methods*, Lewes, Falmer Press.

Burgess, H. and Butcher, J. (1999) 'To challenge or not to challenge: the mentor's dilemma', *Mentoring and Tutoring*, 6 (3), pp 31-47.

Cohen, L., Manion, I. and Morrison, K. (2000) *Research methods in education*, London, Routledge-Falmer.

- Connelly, M. and James, C. (2006) 'Collaboration for school improvement' *BELMAS* 34 (1), pp. 69-87.
- Cordingley, P., Bell, M., Thomas, S. and Firth, A. (2005) *The impact of collaborative continuing professional development (CPD) on classroom teaching and learning*, Research Evidence in Education Library, EPPI Centre, [Online] Available from: <http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms/Default.aspx?tabid=139> (Accessed 16 June 2006).
- Cowley, S. (2002) *Get the buggers to behave*, London, Continuum Press.
- Dart L. and Drake P (1996) 'Subject perspectives in mentoring', in McIntyre, D. and Hagger, H. (eds.) *Mentors in school: developing the teaching profession*, London, David Fulton.
- Day, C. (1999) *Developing teachers: the challenges of lifelong learning*, London, Falmer Press.
- DfES (2001), *Advanced skills teachers; promoting excellence*, Guidance Ref. DfES 0755/2001, [Online] Available from: <http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/DfES-0755-2001.pdf> (Accessed 15 February 2005).
- DfES (2003a) *A new specialist system: transforming secondary education*, Ref DfES/0173/2003, [Online] Available from www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index/ctm?idd=4409 (Accessed 12 Dec 2007).
- DfES (2003b) *The core principles*, [Online] Available from: <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/seu/coreprinciples2/> (Accessed 10 October 2003).
- DfES (2006a) Consultation on new national standards for teachers, [Online] Available from: <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/asts> (Accessed 23 April 2006).

DfES (2007) *Guidance to accompany the standards for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)* Teacher Development Agency, Ref TDA0313, [Online] Available from:
<http://www.tda.gov.uk/about/publicationslisting/TDA0313.aspx> (Accessed 3 July 2007).

Earley, P. and Bubb, S. (2004) *Leading and managing continuing professional development; developing people, developing schools*, London, Paul Chapman.

Engeström, Y, Engeström, R. and Suntio, A. (2002) 'Can a school community learn to master its own future? An activity theoretical study of expansive learning among middle school teachers', in Wells, G, and Claxton, G. (eds.) *Learning for life in the 21st century: sociocultural perspectives on the future of education*, Cambridge MA, Blackwell.

Evans, J., Castle, F., Cooper, D., Glatter, R. and Woods, P. (2005) 'Collaboration: the big new idea for school improvement?', *Journal of Educational Policy*, 20 (2), pp 223-235.

Fielding, M., Cunningham, I., Eraut, M., Thorne, J., Craig, C., Jones, C. and Hope, M. (2005) *Factors influencing the transfer of good practice*, DfES report 615, University of Sussex/Demos.

Frost, D., Durrant, J., Head, M. and Holden, G. (2000) *Teacher led school improvement*, London, Routledge-Falmer.

Frost, D. and Harris, A. (2003) 'Teacher leadership: towards a research agenda', *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 33 (3), pp. 479-498.

Fullan, M. (2001) *The new meaning of educational change*, London, Routledge.

Furlong, J., Barton L, Miles S., Whiting C, Whitty, G. et al. (2001) 'Teacher education in transition; re-forming professionalism', *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 31 (2), pp. 271-276.

Gibbons, M. (2003) DfES Innovations Unit, *Leading Edge Schools Conference*, London, July 2003, [conference speech].

Glaser, B. and Strauss, A. (1968) *The discovery of grounded theory*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

Glatter, R. (2003) 'Collaboration, collaboration, collaboration: the origins and implications of a policy', *BELMAS*, Milton Keynes, October 2003.

Goodwyn, A. and Fidler, B. (2003) 'The contribution of highly skilled teachers to school improvement' Unpublished paper presented at *International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement*, Sydney, January 2003.

Gorard, S. (2006) 'Does policy matter in education?' *International Journal of Research and Method in Education*, 29 (1), pp. 5-21.

Gergen, K. J. (2005) *An Invitation to Social Construction*, London, Sage.

Handscomb, G. (2004) 'Collaboration and enquiry: sharing practice', in Earley, P. and Bubb, S. *Leading and managing continuing professional development; developing people, developing schools*, London, Paul Chapman.

Harland, J. (1990) *The work and impact of Advisory Teachers*, Slough, National Foundation for Educational Research.

Hargreaves, A. (1985) 'The micro-macro problem in the sociology of education', in Burgess, R. G. (ed.) *Issues in educational research*, Lewes, Falmer.

Hargreaves, A. (1991) 'Contrived collegiality: the micropolitics of teacher collaboration', in Bennett, N., Crawford, M. and Riches, C. (eds.) *Managing change in education: individual and organizational perspectives*, London, Open University/Paul Chapman.

- Hargreaves, A. (1994) *Changing teachers, changing times*, London, Cassell.
- Hargreaves, A. (2003) *Teaching in the knowledge society: education in the age of insecurity*, Maidenhead, OUP.
- Hargreaves, D. H. (1997) 'In defence of research for evidence-based teaching: a rejoinder to Martyn Hammersley', *British Educational Research Journal*, 23 (4), pp. 405-419.
- Hargreaves, D. H. (1999) 'The knowledge creating school', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 47 (2), pp. 122-144.
- Hargreaves, D. H. (2003) *Education epidemic: transforming secondary schools through innovation networks*, London, Demos.
- Harris., A and Muijs, D. (2003) *Teacher leadership: a review of research* National College of School Leadership, [Online] Available from: <http://www.ncsl.org.uk/media/1D5/9E/teacher-leadership.pdf> (Accessed 10 September 2004).
- Hastings, S. (2005) 'Advanced Skills Teachers.' *Times Educational Supplement* 05 March 2005, [Online] Available from: http://www.tes.co.uk/search/story/?story_id=2078814 (Accessed 17 December 2007).
- Hitchcock, G. and Hughes, D. (1995) *Research and the teacher: a qualitative introduction to school-based research*, London, Routledge.
- Hopkins, D. (2001) *School improvement for real*, London, Routledge-Falmer.
- Howson, J. (2000) 'Still waiting for heroics from superteachers' *Times Educational Supplement*, 26 May, 2000, [Online] Available from: http://www.tes.co.uk/search/story/?story_id=334845 (Accessed 18 December 2007).

Joyce, B. and Showers, B. (1996) 'The evolution of peer coaching', *Educational Leadership*, 53 (6), pp. 12-16.

Katzenmeyer, M. and Moller, G. (2001) *Awakening the Sleeping Giant*, Thousand Oaks, Corwin Press.

Kerry, T. and Shelton-Mayes, A. (eds.) (1995) *Issues in mentoring*, London, Routledge.

Lave, J., and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated learning: legitimate peripheral participation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Libermann, A. (2000) 'Networks as learning communities – shaping the future of teacher development', *Journal of Teacher Education*, 51, pp. 221-227.

Lucas, P. (1995) 'A neglected source for reflection in the supervision of student teachers', in Kerry, T. and Shelton-Mayes, A. (eds.) *Issues in mentoring*, London, Routledge.

Marshall G. (ed.) 1994 *Concise Oxford dictionary of sociology*, Oxford, OUP.

May, T. (2001) *Social research: issues, methods and process*, Maidenhead, Open University Press.

McEwan, E. K. and McEwan, P. J. (2003) *Making sense of research: what's good, what's not and how to tell the difference*, Thousand Oaks, Corwin Press.

McGavin, H. (2004) 'Tips from the top', *Times Educational Supplement*, January 9, 2004, [Online] Available from: http://www.tes.co.uk/search/story/?story_id=388796 (Accessed 18 December 2007).

McIntyre, D. and Hagger, H. (1996) *Mentors in schools: developing the profession of teaching*, London, Fulton.

Moore, R. (2004) *Education and society: issues and explanations in the sociology of education*, Cambridge, Polity Press.

Morrison, K. (1993) *Planning and accomplishing school-centred evaluation*, Dereham, Peter Francis.

Neuman, W. L. (2000) *Social research methods: qualitative and quantitative approaches*, 4th edition, Boston MA, Allyn and Bacon.

Oakley, A. (1999) 'People's ways of knowing: gender and methodology', in S. Hood, B. Mayall and S. Oliver (eds.) *Critical issues in social research: power and prejudice*, Buckingham, Open University Press.

Office for Public Services Reform (2000) *The effectiveness of different mechanisms for spreading best practice*, Office for Public Management, [Online] Available from: <http://www.servicefirst.gov.uk/2000/guidance/bpresearch2.htm> (Accessed 17 July 2003).

Ofsted (2001) *Advanced Skills Teachers: appointment, deployment and impact*, HMI Ref 273.

Ofsted (October 2003), *Advanced Skills Teachers: a survey*, HMI Ref 767, [Online] Available from: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications> (Accessed 12 January 2004).

O'Grady, C. (2003) 'It's good to talk', *Times Educational Supplement*, 5 September 2003, [Online] Available from:
http://www.tes.co.uk/search/story/?story_id=383378. (Accessed 18 December 2007).

Osterman, K. and Kottkamp, R. (1993) 'Rethinking professional development', in Bennett, N., Glatter, R. and Levačič, R. (1994) *Improving educational management through research and consultancy*, London, Paul Chapman.

O'Neil, J. (1995) 'On schools as learning organizations: a conversation with Peter Senge', *Educational Leadership*, 52 (7), pp. 20-23.

Open University (2001) *E835 Masters programme in education: research methods in education handbook*, Open University.

Paavola, S., Lipponen, L. and Hakkarainen, K. (2004) 'Models of innovative knowledge communities and three metaphors of learning', *Review of Educational Research*, 74 (4), pp. 557-576.

Reynolds, D. (2003) 'So near but yet so far', *Times Educational Supplement*, June 20, 2003, [Online] Available from:
http://www.tes.co.uk/search/story/?story_id=381062 (Accessed 18 December 2007).

Rozenholtz, S. J. (1989) *Teachers' workplace: the social organization of schools*, New York, Longman.

Rudd, P., Lines, A., Schagen, S., Smith, R. and Reakes, A (2004) *Partnership Approaches to Sharing Best Practice*, (LGA Research Report 54), Slough, NFER

Ruddock, J. and Flutter, J. (2004) 'Pupil participation on teaching and learning', in *Consulting pupils: what's in it for school?*, London, Routledge.

Schön, D. (1987) *Educating the reflective practitioner*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.

Shulman, L. S. (2004) *The wisdom of practice: essays on teaching, learning, and learning to teach*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.

Spradley, James (1980) *Participant observation*, New York, Holt Reinhart and Winston.

Stenhouse, L. (1985) 'A view of curriculum research, the teacher and the art of teaching', in Ruddock J., Hopkins D. (eds.) *Research as a basis for teaching: readings from the work of Laurence Stenhouse*, London, Heinemann.

Stoll, L. and Fink, D. (1996) *Changing our schools: linking school effectiveness and school improvement*, Buckingham, Open University Press.

Sutton, A., Wortley, A., Wise, C. and Harrison, J. (2000) 'Superteachers: from policy towards practice', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 48 (4), pp. 413-428.

Sutton, R.E. and Wheatley K.F. (2003) 'Teachers' emotions and teaching: a review of the literature and directions for future research', *Educational Psychology Review*, 15 (4), pp. 327-358.

Talbert, J. E. and McLaughlin, M. W. (1994) 'Teacher professionalism in local school contexts', *American Journal of Education*, 102 (2), pp. 123-153.

Taylor, C. and Jennings, S. (2004) *The work of Advanced Skills Teachers*, Reading, CfBT.

Telford, H. (1996), *Transforming schools through collaborative leadership*, London, Falmer.

Tomlinson, S. (1997), 'Sociological perspectives on failing schools', *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 7 (1), pp. 81-98.

Tripp, D. (1993) *Critical incidents in teaching: developing professional judgment*, London, Routledge.

Tyack, D. and Cuban, L. (1995) *Tinkering toward Utopia: a century of public school reform*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press.

Veugelers, W. and O'Hair, M. J. (2005a) 'Networking for learning and change' in Veugelers, W. and O'Hair, M. J. (eds.) *Network learning for educational change*, Maidenhead, Open University Press.

Veugelers, W. and O'Hair, M. J. (2005b) *Network learning for educational change*, Maidenhead, Open University Press.

Wenger, E. (1998) *Communities of practice: learning, meaning and identity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Whitty, G. (2002) *Making sense of education policy*, London, Paul Chapman.

Wise, C. (2001) 'The monitoring role of the academic middle manager', *Educational Management and Administration*, 29 (3), pp. 333-341.

Woods, P., Evans, J., Castle, F., Levačič, R., Cooper, D. and Glatter, R. (2006) *Diversity and Collaboration? Diversity Pathfinders Evaluation: Final Report*, Research report no RR826, London, DfES.

Woods, P., Woods, G. and Gunter, H. (2007) 'Academy schools and entrepreneurship in education', *Journal of Education Policy*, 22 (2), pp 223-257.

Yin, R. K. (2003) *Case study research: design and methods*, Thousand Oaks, Sage.

Appendices

Appendix A Archive of Government information about ASTs

2003 TES advertisement

What the assessor is looking for: Standards for ASTs

What is outreach?

How your school will benefit

Addressing your concerns: frequently asked questions

Funding

Key points from the first stage consultation (2006)

Professional standards for teachers (2007)

AST standards

Excellent teacher standards

Appendix B Research Instruments

Spring 2004 survey of Advanced skills teachers

Spring 2006 survey of Secondary ASTs

Interview schedules DfES officer, LEA officer 2003

Follow-up interview schedule, LEA officer 2005

AST interview schedule 2004/2005/2006

Appendix C Document collected from visit to school in special measures, Rivershire

Proforma for monitoring (used by ASTs and senior
management team)

Appendix D Analysis of data

Appendix A: Archive of Government information about ASTs

- 2003 Advertisement
- What the assessor is looking for: Standards for ASTs
- What is outreach?¹
- How your school will benefit
- Addressing your concerns: frequently asked questions
- Funding
- Key points from the first stage consultation (2006)
- Professional standards for teachers (2007)
- AST standards
- Excellent teacher standards

¹ DfES (2001) *Advanced skills teachers; promoting excellence*, Guidance Ref. DfES 0755/2001

Advanced Skills Teachers

not all teachers want to be a head
some teachers just want to get ahead...



There are many excellent classroom practitioners with their own unique skills and strengths. Strengths that can be built on by others or used to promote good practice.

The Advanced Skills Teachers scheme provides you with the opportunity to continue with classroom teaching while also challenging yourself by doing something slightly different.

If you want to stay in the classroom and help shape the future of teaching, why not think about becoming an AST?

Advanced Skills Teachers are teachers who have been recognised through external assessment as having excellent classroom practice. They are given additional payment and non-contact time to share their skills and experience with other teachers and to learn from them. The AST grade offers teachers a different way to progress their careers without having to leave the classroom and take on management responsibilities.

ASTs have a discrete role. They are not advisers, trainers or inspectors but rather the perspective they offer to other teachers is that of the excellent practitioner who can provide a wide range of practical help and advice to improve classroom practice.

ASTs spend 80% of their time teaching their own classes and 20% on outreach. The outreach role involves ASTs working outside their own schools on a wide variety of activities that harness their particular skills and attributes. Outreach can include the induction and mentoring of newly qualified teachers, sharing good practice through demonstration lessons, developing schemes of work and much more. The 20% allocated for outreach includes time for preparation and all work associated with outreach activities.

ASTs have their own salary scale ranging from £29,757 to £47,469 nationally and £35,700 to £53,412 in inner London. Schools decide salary levels, placing individual teachers on a five point range within the scale based on the demands of the particular post.

"Being an AST is wonderful for professional development and it provides a perfect opportunity to do something different, while still continuing to teach"
Judy Gurney, AST Beegrove Infant School, Buckinghamshire.

"The AST role is primarily to do with modelling or 'walking the talk'. It involves developing and promoting best practice and collegially, both within your own school and through outreach"
Delta Smith, Headteacher, St Angela's Ursuline School, Newham, London

To find out more about the grade ring for a brochure on 0845 60 222 60 quoting reference DfES/0040/2002 or visit www.teachernet.gov.uk/ast



WHAT THE ASSESSOR IS LOOKING FOR

The assessor will want to satisfy himself or herself that candidates meet the standards for Advanced Skills Teachers. These are:

1 Excellent results/outcomes

As a result of aspiring ASTs teaching, pupils show consistent improvement in relation to prior and expected attainment; are highly motivated, enthusiastic and respond positively to challenge and high expectations; exhibit consistently high standards of discipline and behaviour; show a consistent record of parental involvement and satisfaction.

2 Excellent subject and/or specialist knowledge

Aspiring ASTs must keep up to date in their subjects and/or specialism(s); have a full understanding of connections and progressions in the subject and use this in their teaching to ensure pupils make good progress; quickly understand pupils' perceptions and misconceptions from their questions and responses; understand ICT in the teaching of their subject or specialism(s).

3 Excellent ability to plan

Aspiring ASTs must prepare lessons and sequences of lessons with clear objectives to ensure successful learning by all pupils; set consistently high expectations for pupils in their class and homework; plan their teaching to ensure it builds on the current and previous achievement of pupils.

4 Excellent ability to teach, manage pupils and maintain discipline

Aspiring ASTs must understand and use the most effective teaching methods to achieve the teaching objectives in hand; display flair and creativity in engaging, enthusing and challenging groups of pupils; use questioning and explanation skilfully to secure maximum progress; develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills as appropriate within their phase and context; are able to provide positive and targeted support for pupils who have special educational needs, are very able, are from ethnic minorities, lack confidence, have behavioural difficulties or are disaffected; maintain respect and discipline and are consistent and fair.

5 Excellent ability to assess and evaluate

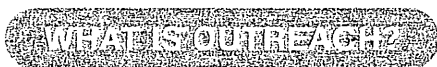
Aspiring ASTs must use assessment as part of their teaching to diagnose pupils' needs, set realistic and challenging targets for improvement and plan future teaching; improve their teaching through evaluating their own practice in relation to pupils' progress, school targets and inspection evidence.

6 Excellent ability to advise and support other teachers

Aspiring ASTs must provide clear feedback, good support and sound advice to others; are able to provide examples, coaching and training to help others become more effective in their teaching; can help others to evaluate the impact of their teaching on raising pupils achievements; are able to analyse teaching and understand how improvements can be made; have highly developed inter-personal skills which allow them to be effective in schools and situations other than their own; provide a role model for pupils and other staff through their personal and professional conduct; know how to plan and prioritise their own time and activity effectively; are highly respected and able to motivate others.

The AST role benefits:

- their own school by drawing on their expertise more widely;
- other schools through the contribution the AST is able to make;
- the LEA by sharing good practice across schools;
- the AST in terms of broader experience and new challenges;
- the profession by providing a new career option;
- pupils and students through the AST's special contribution to raising teaching and learning standards.



Commitment to outreach is the distinctive feature of the Advanced Skills Teacher. This means that their skills can be used to share excellent practice beyond their own school into the wider educational community.

How does it work?

Outreach provides the means for the wider dissemination of good practice. In the past some schools have shared good practice in this way but often on an *ad hoc* basis. The AST grade provides one way to formalise such arrangements and build on them. For outreach to work most effectively it needs to be planned and co-ordinated. The LEA or other body sponsoring the arrangements will take the key co-ordinating role, ensuring that outreach is planned, delivered, monitored and assessed. Outreach provides an important means whereby the AST can support the priorities identified in the LEA's Education Development Plan and help raise standards in its schools. This could involve, for example:

- targeted support to schools experiencing difficulties, including those in special measures;
- co-ordinated activity to raise achievement across schools in an area.

Examples of outreach work include:

- providing exemplar lessons to be observed by teachers from a cluster of schools;
- working with the LEA to support induction of newly qualified teachers across the authority;
- holding seminars on teaching methodology with schools in the authority;
- supporting teachers in schools causing concern;
- supporting the implementation of the National Grid For Learning in primary schools.

The challenge of outreach is the challenge of “making a difference” within the education system in a far broader way than is normally possible.

The Government sees outreach as an exciting opportunity to find imaginative and innovative ways of sharing good practice, including through the use of new communications technology. Schools which have received outreach have spoken warmly of the benefits.

The AST role must include 20% outreach work as a condition of support from the Standards Fund, except where an AST is employed in a school subject to special measures and where their activities are clearly related to the school's and/or LEA's plans for removing the school from this category. Where the school is funding the post from its own budget outreach, though encouraged, is not a requirement. However, even in these cases, we recommend that ASTs do some outreach work to develop their own ability to share their expertise, as part of their own continuing professional development.

How your school will benefit

Your School

The AST scheme can play a vital role in overcoming many of the key challenges faced by schools today:

1. Attracting and retaining key teachers

Many teachers want to progress in their careers, but do not want to move into a management role. The Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) scheme is the only career path that enables teachers to continue spending the majority of their time working in the classroom.

2. Improving staff motivation

The recognition and reward of good practices and key skills has a considerable motivational effect on the AST and other teachers. The injection of new ideas and challenges can also stimulate greater creativity and dynamism amongst staff, pupils and the school as a whole.

3. Raising achievement levels

Feedback on new approaches gained by the AST from other teachers and schools can result in an overall improvement in teaching and learning standards - helping to raise levels of educational achievement.

4. Broadening the skills base

The AST role is a unique opportunity for teachers to develop and enhance both the depth and range of their skills through their work with other teachers and ASTs and their participation in local and national professional development initiatives.

5. Increasing the school's prestige

Given its high priority within government, the AST programme has attracted considerable attention from the teaching profession, school governing bodies and parents. The appointment of an AST can positively enhance a school's local and national profile by demonstrating the school's commitment to improving teaching and learning standards.

6. Developing inter-school co-operation

Through their outreach work ASTs can foster close working relationships with other educational establishments, including feeder schools, providing the foundation for new initiatives such as resource sharing and collaborative learning projects.

7. Creating a 'snowball' effect

An AST can help an individual teacher overcome a particular issue. But the effects of that work do not end there. With every problem solved or best practice shared there is a cumulative or "snowball" effect that will benefit the school and its pupils for many years to come.

"The AST scheme provides a means of nurturing professional development, while keeping teachers motivated, challenged and satisfied. And it keeps them on the staff! ASTs also play a key role in ensuring that the school is continually moving forward through the sharing of ideas. They enable the school to raise standards right across the board."

Addressing your concerns

Your Questions

"If I want a new career challenge why not just become a Department Head?"

Because you may want to be a teacher, rather than a manager. The AST role is about recognising and rewarding excellent classroom practitioners. It allows you to do what you do best - in the classroom - while also offering you the opportunity to raise standards of teaching and learning by assisting other teachers and honing your own 'best practice' ideas and approaches.

"All of my colleagues are 'excellent'. Why should I say that I'm better than them?"

There are many excellent classroom practitioners and everyone is welcome to apply for an AST post. But suitable

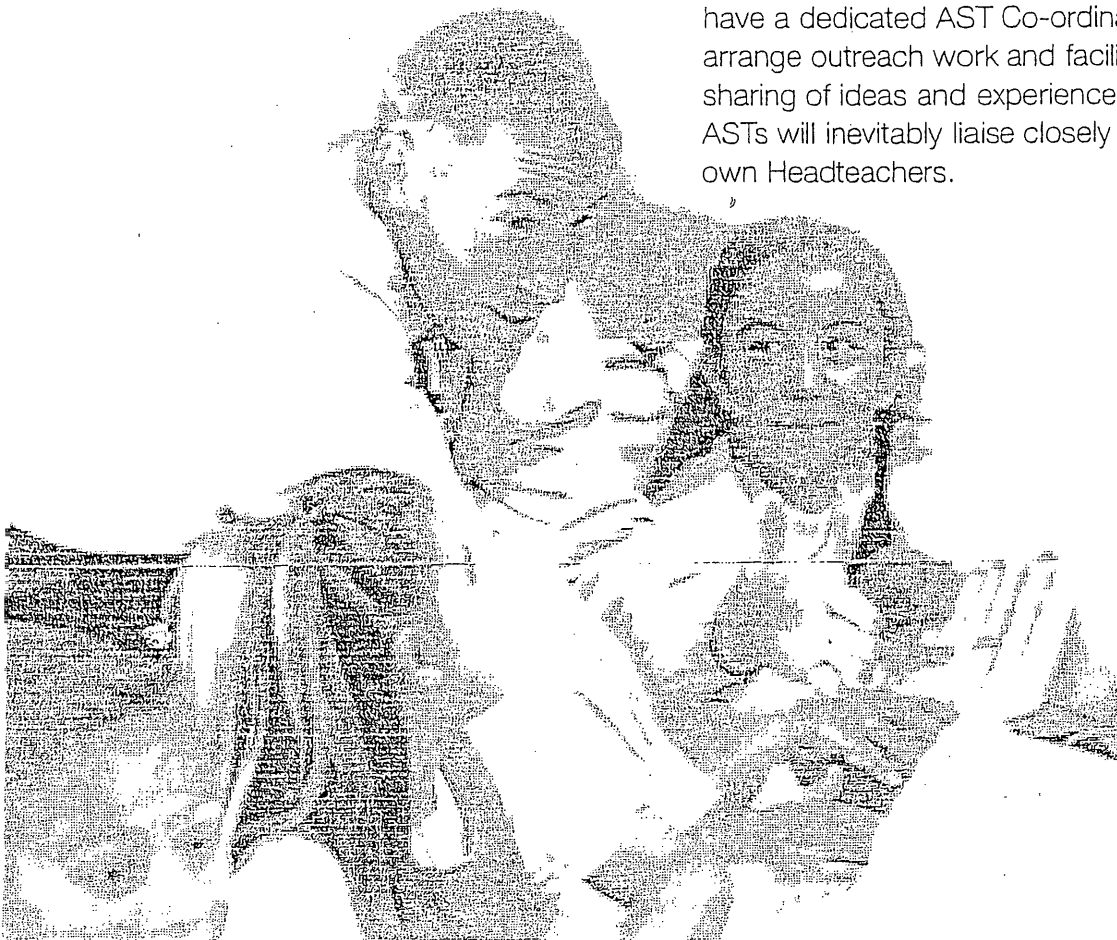
candidates will almost certainly already be recognised by colleagues as having the particular professional and inter-personal skills needed to be successful in the role.

"How do I know that this isn't just another passing fad?"

The Government is committed to increasing the number of ASTs. Over time it is anticipated that ASTs will represent 3-5% of the teaching population. In addition, there is no fixed time limit for AST posts; decisions about the length of posts will depend upon the priorities of schools and LEAs.

"What support would I get as an AST?"

A complete infrastructure is in place to support and promote the work of ASTs. Nationally, the DfES offers a range of advice and guidance services, while your LEA will also have a dedicated AST Co-ordinator to arrange outreach work and facilitate the sharing of ideas and experience. In addition, ASTs will inevitably liaise closely with their own Headteachers.



" I had been in classroom teaching for seven years and felt that I needed to move on, but I didn't want to go down the management route. Consequently, the AST role was very appealing. Every other role, apart from the AST, means less classroom work and that's the thing that you like and enjoy most - teaching children."

Paul McKay | Advanced Skills Teacher | Hallsville Primary School

"Aren't ASTs just 'hired guns' used to provide extra resources?"

ASTs do not take over classrooms or provide supply cover. But ASTs do bring a new perspective to help reach solutions collaboratively by ensuring that dedicated time is available to support the development of best practice teaching and learning.

"Why would I want to criticise my colleagues?"

ASTs do not report on or judge performance. Under the direction of the Headteacher, their role is to work as an integral part of the school's team providing unbiased advice and practical guidance whenever and wherever it is needed to improve overall teaching standards.

"Wouldn't I just be at the beck and call of the LEA and/or other schools?"

No. The role of the LEA is to match both the skills and the availability of their ASTs with the requirements of schools. Furthermore, only 20% of an AST's time is spent working on outreach, and this can be scheduled to suit the particular needs of each person.

"I can't just leave my classroom to work on outreach. Who would provide the teaching cover?"

Without doubt effective pre-planning is essential. Schools that already employ ASTs have developed a number of

innovative approaches to provide consistent teaching cover and ensure that the education of their children does not suffer. These include the re-deployment of existing resources, the use of part-time staff, such as recently retired colleagues, and the scheduling of lessons to incorporate time for outreach. The AST scheme gives you the flexibility to determine the most effective approach for you and your school.

"Our school is already performing well. What's the point of becoming an AST?"

Congratulations! In that case, you could be an ideal AST, helping to share the good practices that you have developed, honing the teaching methods that you use, building closer relationships with other schools and generally raising the profile of your school. As well as this, your school gains from the experiences of other schools.

"Would I be paid more as an AST?"

Yes. Although how much will depend on where you were to start with. ASTs attract a salary beyond the classroom teacher pay scale in return for taking on additional duties. ASTs will normally be expected to drop their management role freeing their time for AST duties.

"At the end of the day it's also great to get feedback and know that you have helped to improve results, boost the confidence of other teachers and generally enhance the self-esteem of the school. That's the beauty of being an AST - you've got something tangible to show for your work. From a career point of view it has given me a new lease of life."

Ann Holland | Advanced Skills Teacher | Temple School

SECTION 4 — FUNDING

NB: More detailed/background information about funding can be found at the bottom of this page.

General Funding Issues

Q.50. How are ASTs funded?

There are various ways in which AST posts can be funded including: by the Standards Fund; by the LEA — using its new powers to use Education Formula Spend (EFS) funding; and by the school (or group of schools).

Q.51. How long will AST funding last?

Standards Fund grant funding for AST posts is now available up to March 2008. Decisions on the use of alternative methods of funding AST posts beyond the number supported through the standards fund will be made locally, and are not subject to any time limits.

Q.52. What are the funding implications for the school if an AST goes on maternity leave?

The AST's salary will continue to be paid at the existing rate by the school and funding can be drawn from whatever source supports that particular post. However, unless there are specific reasons to continue paying it, funding for outreach will not be payable for the period that the AST is on paid or unpaid maternity leave.

Q.53. Can a school fund an AST post?

Yes. Increasingly schools are funding their own AST posts. This is often in order to use the ASTs to help fulfil the school's overall outreach commitments — for example those associated with specialist school status. It must be remembered that even where the school is funding its own AST post outreach work should still be an integral part of the AST's role, unless exceptional circumstances apply.

Q.54. My school is willing to fund the post from its own budget. Does it have to pay for the assessment too?

No. The DfES pays for the cost of ALL assessments, however, when completing the application form the source of funding for the post must be declared.

Q.55. Can a group of schools fund an AST post?

Yes. Groups or clusters of schools can combine to support one or more shared AST posts. This may be particularly useful for networks of small primary schools where an AST may teach in two or three schools and do outreach work across the network.

Standards Fund

Q.56. What posts does the Standards Fund pay for?

The current AST standards fund grant is available for a specific number of AST posts, which reflects the number of ASTs in post in each LEA in April 2004. AST posts created in addition to this number will need to be funded via the EFS mechanism or by the school(s). It is the intention that as funding for ASTs becomes embedded AST posts will be increasingly mainstreamed.

Q.57. What does the Standards Fund grant cover?

In 2005 -2006, the grant provides £6,200 towards cover for the cost of outreach (pro rata) and an average of £9,300 for the additional cost to the school of placing the AST on the AST pay scale. Eligible expenditure on salary includes: the additional salary paid to the

Key points from the first stage

Over three thousand people in the profession took part in the first stage of the consultation on professional standards for teachers. Here is a summary of the key points that gained support.

The scope of the review includes consideration of:

- the changing structure of the school workforce
- the role of teachers in multi-disciplinary teams and
- the common core of skills and knowledge for the children's workforce needs to be appropriately reflected in the standards.

Excellent teacher

- Should be distinct from AST standards.
- Advising, coaching and mentoring other teachers in the school should be a key element.
- Should be a leading example of teaching in the classroom.
- Should be involved in some capacity with the development of wider school issues.
- Should have responsibility to extend their knowledge of pedagogy and their knowledge of their subject.
- The role should include motivating and inspiring pupils.
- Should be innovative/take risks and creative in their teaching.
- Should be committed to and successful in improving pupil attainment.
- Should be able to articulate effective practice in pedagogy.
- Leading curriculum development and leading learning should be reflected.
- The qualities of a reflective practitioner should be a key element.

Advanced skills teacher

- Should be distinct from excellent teacher standards.
- Appropriate standards for leadership should be included.
- The standards should emphasise working in unfamiliar environments and in a range of different contexts, to transfer and adapt methods from one situation to another and to work with a range of professional colleagues in different settings.
- Evaluating others' teaching needs to be reflected.
- The standards should include reference to working with headteachers/ leadership team to establish a new culture of professional development for all teachers.

D.A.Cooper

From: Corporate Comms [corporatecomms@tda.gov.uk]
Sent: 29 June 2007 15:51
To: D.A.Cooper@open.ac.uk
Subject: Professional Standards for Teachers - framework finalised



29th June 2007

Dear Deborah,

Professional Standards for Teachers

After extensive consultation, the revised framework of the professional standards for teachers has now been finalised*.

Almost 10,000 people took part in this process, and the Training and Development Agency for Schools would like to thank everyone for their contribution.

The standards provide the framework for a teacher's career and clarify how progression takes place. To enter each career stage a teacher will need to demonstrate that he/she has met the relevant standards – as happens now. The framework will provide a backdrop to performance management discussions about how practising teachers' performance should be viewed in relation to their current career stage and, where appropriate, that which they are approaching. Specifically, it provides professional standards for:

- the award of qualified teacher status (QTS) (Q)
- teachers on the main scale who have successfully completed their induction (C)
- teachers on the upper pay scale (post threshold teachers) (P)
- excellent teachers (E), and
- advanced skills teachers (A).

The framework is arranged in three inter-related sections, covering:

- professional attributes

- professional knowledge and understanding, and
- professional skills.

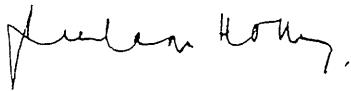
The framework will provide the basis for course design in initial teacher training (ITT). Guidance will be available to support ITT providers in working with the revised standards. The framework will also help identify the professional development needs of practising teachers from September 2007. Where teachers wish to progress to the next career stage, the next level of the framework provides a reference point for future development. The framework will also support teachers in identifying ways to broaden and deepen their expertise within their current roles.

All the standards are underpinned by the five key outcomes for children and young people identified in Every Child Matters and the six areas of the common core of skills and knowledge for the children's workforce.

To view the publication, Professional Standards for Teachers, please go to www.tda.gov.uk/standards Hard copies in booklet or poster format are being printed and can be ordered via the website.

To view the ITT requirements and related preliminary guidance please go to www.tda.gov.uk/requirementsreview

Yours sincerely



Graham Holley
Chief
Executive

*The standards for post-threshold teachers, excellent teachers and ASTs are pay standards and are subject to Parliamentary approval .

DISCLAIMER

This e-mail and any files transmitted with it may be confidential or legally privileged and are intended solely for the use of the recipient to whom they are addressed.

If you are not the intended recipient of this e-mail or the person responsible for delivering it to them please delete it and notify the sender immediately. Do not take any action based on it, copy it, forward it or otherwise use it for any purpose or disclose its contents to any other person. To do so may be unlawful.

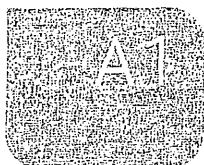
Any views or opinions presented are solely those of the sender and do not necessarily represent those of The Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) unless otherwise specifically stated. As internet communications are not secure we do not accept legal responsibility for the contents of this message nor responsibility for any changes made to this message after it was sent by the original sender.

The TDA has the right to monitor emails in accordance with the Telecommunications (Lawful Business Practice) (Interception of communications) Regulations 2000.

Professional Attitudes

Professional Attitudes Framework

Frameworks



Be willing to take on a strategic leadership role in developing workplace policies and practice and in promoting collective responsibility for their implementation in their own and other workplaces.

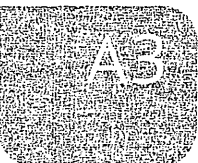
Professional Skills

Professional Skills Framework

Team working and collaboration



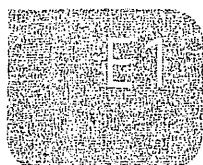
Be part of or work closely with leadership teams, taking a leadership role in developing, implementing and evaluating policies and practice in their own and other workplaces that contribute to school improvement.



Possess the analytical, interpersonal and organisational skills necessary to work effectively with staff and leadership teams beyond their own school.

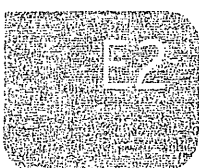
Professional responsibilities

Frameworks



Be willing to take a leading role in developing workplace policies and practice and in promoting collective responsibility for their implementation.

Personal professional development

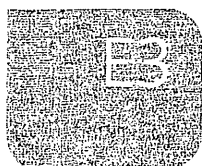


Research and evaluate innovative curricular practices and draw on research outcomes and other sources of external evidence to inform their own practice and that of colleagues.

Professional knowledge and understanding

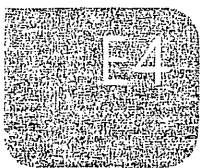
Evaluating evidence should

Teaching and learning



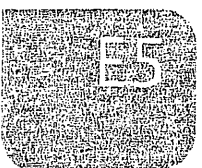
Have a critical understanding of the most effective teaching, learning and behaviour management strategies, including how to select and use approaches that personalise learning to provide opportunities for all learners to achieve their potential.

Assessment and monitoring



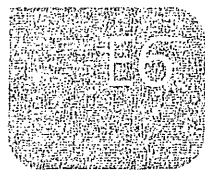
Know how to improve the effectiveness of assessment practice in the workplace, including how to analyse statistical information to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning across the school.

Subjects and curriculum



Have an extensive and deep knowledge and understanding of their subjects/curriculum areas and related pedagogy gained for example through involvement in wider professional networks associated with their subjects/curriculum areas.

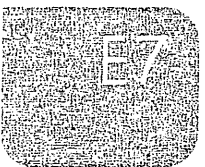
Achievement and diversity



Have an extensive knowledge on matters concerning equality, inclusion and diversity in teaching.

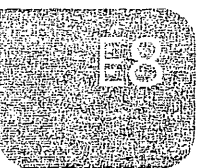
Professional skills

Planning

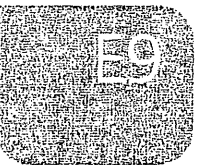


- (a) Take a lead in planning collaboratively with colleagues in order to promote effective practice.
- (b) Identify and explore links within and between subjects/curriculum areas in their planning.

Teaching

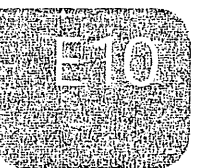


Have teaching skills which lead to excellent results and outcomes.

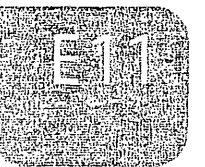


Demonstrate excellent and innovative pedagogical practice.

Assessing, monitoring and giving feedback



Demonstrate excellent ability to assess and evaluate.



Have an excellent ability to provide learners, colleagues, parents and carers with timely, accurate and constructive feedback on learners' attainment, progress and areas for development that promotes pupil progress.

Appendix B: Research Instruments

- Spring 2004 Survey of Advanced Skills Teachers
- Spring 2006 Survey of Secondary ASTs
- Interview schedules DfES officer, LEA officer 2003
- Follow up interview schedule, LEA officer 2005
- AST interview schedule 2004/2005/2006

SPRING 2004

SURVEY OF ADVANCED SKILLS TEACHERS

I am investigating the experience of ASTs as part of my doctorate. Your views would be very much appreciated. All information will be treated in the strictest confidence.

1. Please tell me who you are and where you work:

Name

Name of school

Optional

optional

Type - primary/secondary/faith/specialist/other Your age

LEA Date of AST appointment

Number of years teaching experience Your subject specialism

Who funds your post? LEA/School/Other

Any other responsibilities in school (e.g. Head of Department)

Present Past.....

2. Why did you want to become an AST?

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. Which aspects are most enjoyable and why?

.....

.....

.....

.....

4. What are the difficulties in this post?

.....

.....

.....

.....

5. What AST duties do you do in your own school? Indicate most frequent activities with *

.....

.....

.....

.....

6. Within your own school, how would you rate your contribution as AST?

Your general contribution to teaching and learning with your school
1 = none 2= A little 3= ok 4= good 5= significant

The benefits to your own professional development
1 = no benefits 2= A little 3= ok 4= good 5= significant

(Secondary)Your contribution to teaching and learning within your department
1 = none 2=A little 3= ok 4=good 5= significant

7. Are you involved in outreach work in another school? ☐Yes ☐No

If not please indicate reasons.....

Please indicate number of schools you have worked with

How did these outreach schools differ from your own?
.....

.....

Have you done any outreach as group or team? ☐Yes ☐No

Briefly outline types of work undertaken in outreach schools.
.....

.....

8. If you are involved in outreach work now, how would you rate your contribution?

Your contribution to teaching and learning with specific teacher
1 = no benefits 2= A little 3= ok 4= good 5= significant

Your contribution to teaching and learning in the school in general
1 = none 2=A little 3= ok 4=good 5= significant

The benefits to your own professional development
1 = no benefits 2= A little 3= ok 4= good 5= significant

9. AST networks
Do you have regular informal contact with other ASTs? ☐Yes ☐No

Do you participate in any e-chatrooms or e-conferences with other ASTs? ☐Yes ☐No

Are you part of a formal AST cluster or regional group? ☐Yes ☐No

How useful is this formal support?
1 = not at all 2 = somewhat 3 = useful 4 = very useful ☐

What other support would you like to see for ASTs?
.....
.....

10. ASTs and Senior Management

In your own school, are you a member of the SMT? ☐Yes ☐No

Do you think ASTs should be part of the SMT? ☐Not Sure ☐Yes ☐No

Do you feel your SMT know enough about your work as an AST? ☐Not Sure ☐Yes ☐No

In your outreach school, have you met with the SMT about your AST work? ☐Yes ☐No

What is the ideal length of time to remain an AST?.....

11. Anything else you wish to tell me about your experience in the AST role :

.....
.....
.....

Thanks again for your time and comments.

Spring 2006 Survey: views of Secondary ASTs

I am nearly at the end of my doctorate research on the work of Secondary ASTs. Please could you help by scoring these agree/disagree statements. There is no obligation to give your name but please indicate your subject:-----

		1 Agree	2	3	4	5 Disagree	Don't know
1	In outreach I gain as much as I give						
2	If funding were withdrawn my school would probably still agree to fund my outreach work						
3	I am not able to fulfill the 20% outreach time						
4	I prefer outreach work in schools in similar circumstances to my own						
5	Colleagues think outreach is a soft option						
6	Most of my outreach work is with primary schools not secondary						
7	I usually have freedom to decide the agenda in outreach						
8	I get enough outreach work via my own contacts and networks						
9	I have enough outreach work given to me by the Local Authority						
10	My outreach experience includes teaching students in other schools as well as supporting teachers						
11	I see myself as a leader						
12	Being an AST gives me a licence to be more creative & take risks						
13	Knowing what sort of feedback to give to colleagues comes naturally and is based on my experience						
14	I have used Ofsted criteria when observing colleagues						
15	I have opportunities to take the initiative on teaching and learning in my own school						
16	In my AST work I am mainly working on my own						
17	I work in a group with other ASTs on projects across the county						
18	My school is operating in a highly competitive local environment						
19	I support moves for ASTs to work closely with senior management						
20	The AST role in reality is more to do with generic teaching issues rather than subject expertise						

Many thanks again to all those here who have already been very kind in sharing their experiences.

Deborah Cooper

D.A.Cooper@open.ac.uk

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: LEA OFFICER AND DfES OFFICER 2003/2004

• OVERVIEW & CONTEXT OF AST WORK

How many ASTs?
Recruitment patterns/target numbers
Where deployed and why?
Any changes
Funding mechanism
Rationale and context for this strategy

• BENEFITS

At school level
At LEA level
At teacher level
AST perceptions
Any documents/further data?

• ANY BARRIERS OR DIFFICULTIES?

• ORGANISATION

Training/support
Any recommended events for me to observe?
Evaluation/monitoring: data/documents available?
Link with other LEA priorities/strategies

• HOW AST ROLE FITS WITH OTHER LEA/DfES POLICIES

How contribution to raising standards is measured
History of collaboration
Anyone else to talk to in LEA

• OUTREACH WORK WITH OTHER SCHOOLS

How is it organised?
What is the feedback?
Any issues arising
Examples of range of outreach

• FUTURE PLANS FOR ASTs

Note: End by restating research aims. Anyone else to talk to? Can I come back to you/check email for follow-up queries?

LEA STRATEGY

- What is LEA strategy for the central deployment of ASTs? How do you decide where they go? (Examples of most successful and lessons learnt)
- Have there been any changes in the past year to the way you use ASTs?
- Do you still see outreach as a barrier?
- What lessons have been learnt about how to do outreach better?
- If I were from the TES what would you want to show me to illustrate AST work?
- Are the clusters of ASTs now in operation in or elsewhere?
- Are most of the ASTs located in the most successful schools?
- Is most of the outreach done in the least successful schools?
- Is there enough work for ASTs here?
- What training or induction is done for ASTs here?
- Are there any examples of ASTs working across subject boundaries on generic issues?
- Tell me more on links between LEA adviser and AST
- Anything specific on Science ASTs and English ASTs

AST IMPACT

- What is your advice on measuring impact of ASTs? Are some aspects of work more difficult to measure than others?
- Some people say that transferring good practice across school contexts is difficult do you agree or disagree? Others say better to concentrate on internal differences.
- What do headteachers need to be aware of AST role so that put to best use?

Question	Prompt	Comment
1. What do you see as the benefit to you of being an AST?	Can you give me a personal example and a curriculum benefit example?	Worked as warm up but changed to "are there any benefits?" Plenty on personal benefits and mutual professional development but less on curriculum specifics.
2. Tell me what you have been doing in your AST job in this school	Look for e.g. of if there was an observation culture in home school if still had	Sometimes skipped this question because it came up anyway I
3. Tell me something about the kind of work you did in outreach schools including why you went	Did it involve classroom observation? How school differed from yours? How did requests come your way? How many schools	Varied from a list of activities to personal impact of deficit work to skills work
4. On balance do you prefer working at home or in outreach school?	Would you like to do more or less outreach? Would you like to do it differently?	Helped get beyond the list of jobs to quality of experience, any obstacles.
5. In your outreach work did you		Raised question of how work is

already know the teacher or were you going in as a stranger? Does it make any difference?		initiated informal route or via official LEA channels
6. What steps are involved in helping another teacher?	Tips, things you have learnt about how to do this	Variable interpretations of "steps" from admin procedures to impact.
7. Do you get wider opportunities to contribute to teaching and learning beyond your subject?	Probe for details on how this works, how it fits with school priorities	May already have been covered Also uncovered other teacher training/coaching experience
8. Some education commentators and researchers say that is hard to transfer good practice to other contexts. Do you agree or disagree?		Answered in relation to own experience rather than as concept. Perhaps need to separate out opinion type questions?
9. Who knows what you do? Who do you report to?		Answers about LEA forms
10. Anything else at all you want to say on AST role or a question you think I should have asked you?		Useful catchall where perceived limitations of the job came up

Appendix C: Document collected from visit to school in special measures, Rivershire

- Proforma for monitoring (used by ASTs and senior management team)

Teaching & Learning
Proforma for Monitoring & Evaluation Visits
Monday 9th January

Observer		Subject	
Period	3 or 4	Teacher	
		Class	

Assessment for Learning Focus

- ☐ Appropriate WALT/WILF displayed & referred to.
- ☐ Assessment for Learning display in classroom (e.g. grade/level descriptor posters).
- ☐ Reference to assessment levels/grades during visit (spoken or on board).
- ☐ Interviewed student knows level/grade currently working at.
- ☐ Interviewed student knows subject target level/grade working to.
- ☐ Interviewed student knows steps needed to take to progress towards target.

Differentiation Focus

- ☐ Is the teacher aware of which students are on the SEN register? (Evidence: lesson plan/active file).
- ☐ Is the teacher aware of what the needs are for SEN students? (Evidence: lesson plan(s) or IEPs/notes in active file).
- ☐ Does the lesson plan contain brief but specific notes on differentiation? (Not just differentiation by task or outcome e.g. Extension task = complete without support).
- ☐ Is there evidence of some 'shaking up'/'modifying'/'adapting' core activities for different groups of students (ability, learning styles)?
- ☐ Is there clear indication of effective use of LSA on the lesson plan (i.e. brief notes about LSA involvement) – does LSA have a copy of lesson plan?
- ☐ If questioning is seen, is there evidence of differentiation i.e. extension questions, higher level questions for more able?

Comments (if needed):

Appendix D: Analysis of data

Annotated interview transcript extract

**Extract from interview transcript with Science AST, Rivershire Telephone
interview January, 2006.**

My notes and analysis in []. Significant phrases in bold

Q. What about outreach, in what way is that different; what kind of work have you had to do there? I know you've done a huge range. [*Respondent completed a survey which told me this*]

A. Yes, it changes; this year I'm doing predominantly outreach to primary schools, just local primary schools in the....., local area, and I mean it has changed over the years. When I first started doing it was very much, because I was **advertising** my services, so to speak . . . [*Link to Fielding et al entrepreneurial teachers*]

Q. In order to get the outreach work?

A. I did lots of demonstration lessons when I started, which I think works quite well, because **people know you** and then they'll go to a meeting and say '**you can get him in**', [*informal network important he is not a stranger sent by LEA*] so it became a bit like that. I felt as if I was being a bit abused sometimes – they were getting me in to do certain lessons just like an extra teacher. [*ambiguity about just teaching not clear what he would prefer to do does he mean nobody was present?*]

Q. A bit like a supply?

A. Yes, but I think having done that **you get known within the area because it's not well advertised.** [*view on limitations of LEA organization*] I suppose each LEA is different. Some ASTs I spoke to from different LEAs, it seems very well organized and well structured, their outreach work. InI don't think that's the case, it's very ad hoc and it's very much **sort it out yourself**, [*solo, needs initiative. Same as teacher leadership?*] which is OK but there's obviously a supply and demand and **it's matching people up with problems with someone who can sort it out for them.** [*deficit model LEA gives problem schools*]; like last year I was going to a school that was in special measures, a secondary school in....., and that was flagged up by the LEA and they said 'can you go' so I was there once a week.

Q. How was that experience? It's not an easy thing I shouldn't think.

A. No, it wasn't. Because I'm teaching at **a really nice school with no discipline problems at all** [*I checked high status of this school in league tables and also found mention of by school in special measures as one of the top schools with a successful link because it is out of the area not a competitor*] and going into a different school like that was a bit of an eye-opener to be honest.[*crossing the comfort zone re behaviour*]

Q. What did they want you to do? Was it realistic? I don't mean about your performance personally, I mean that LEA idea that it takes one AST.

A. I think they just wanted as much help in the school as they could possibly get because it was going under, and it did eventually fail. It's Ofsted again, and it's closed. I don't know if you know the history of it but it's been taken over by another school and become a lower school for a different school, so the site is still used but the school wasn't deemed saveable.

Q. It's got a new name or something?

A. Yes. I originally went it and I gave a few sessions again. I thought **well, I'm not going to go in and talk about discipline or anything because these guys probably know more about it than I do because they're there in the firing line,** [*view of different context and respect for internal knowledge of colleagues*] but again I was talking about using digital projectors and trying to spice up the lessons a bit and make it a bit more fun; just some bread-and-butter stuff, openers and plenaries and all that sort of stuff. We had a few meetings and the people from the LEA were coming in as well [*compare interviews in school in special measures lots of external help when school in trouble. Any examples seen of ASTs from lower status school going to higher status?*] but then on a weekly basis I was going in and helping a couple of members of staff in science so I was there **as another body in with particular groups that were causing real trouble.** [*behaviour issue*] And there was one member of staff in particular he was dying a death to be honest with you, with certain groups that he was at, so I was going in and helping to quell the riot – it was a bit of an experience.

Q. I can see that you've had a complete range from that sort of to working with local primaries at the moment.

A. And I've done it for several years now, going toUniversity and do a few sessions on their PGCE course for them so that works quite well usually.[*compare early HEI views and fears on schoolbased training!*]

Q. They must be really glad to have a practitioner like you in there.

A. They're pretty good at getting people to come in, I get the impression they have quite a few guest speakers so it works out quite well.

Q. In terms of outreach, do you think there is anything in it for your school? If you had a head opposite you saying 'if we don't get funding for outreach we're not going to do it, let them go because there's nothing in it for us'. Would you argue against that or agree with it? *[New question not on schedule]*

A. I have to feel there is, there's something in it because **we've got specialist school status and quite often the school is going for a grant or maintaining a certain level of status that the school's got,** and the head's coming to me saying 'look, we've got this section on this form that we have to fill in saying how do we work in the community and what are the wider reaches of the school', **so that's when I can fill that section in for the head, me and the other ASTs, so** you can see that the school is actually benefiting from that, **the kudos of having people doing this outreach work.** *[This is new! Outreach as enhancing status of school. Is this really showing off, enhancing market stake rather than collaboration?]*

Q. And you said at the beginning that there is something in it for you in a way in the variety. So on balance would you say that you'd like to do more outreach or that it's about right, the 80-20?

A. It's probably round about right. It's difficult really, because sometimes **it sort of takes over and you feel you could do with a secondment for a couple of weeks or so.** *[any egs of secondment/intensive time elsewhere? Time could be more flexible]* But it's timetabling problems as well and timetabling this year and then last year hasn't been too bad because personally the timetable has managed to **chunk my AST time** *[this TIME topic appears in every single interview as an issue]* but in the past it has been **a problem because my AST periods have been scattered.** You can imagine in a five-period day I might have one AST period in the middle.

Q. Yes, you can't do a lot with that.

A. You can't go out anyway, so it's a waste of time. So you just can't do it, you might have an afternoon, so you say you've got to block it. And because I'm science, and quite often I'm going to primaries as well, and again they're doing literacy numeracy hour in the morning so they don't want to know me in the morning, they'll be quite interested if I'm coming round in the afternoon, so again I'm interested in afternoon blocks, so I think that's been sussed out now, so for the past couple of years the timetable has worked quite well. My AST time has been done **predominantly in afternoon blocks,** it's been messed about a bit **but that is an issue with ASTs.**

Q. Yes, I'm definitely going to note that. I was also thinking about the job that you've got which is supporting other teachers, which is a different thing from being an excellent teacher in your own right. If you were trying to give advice to another new AST or someone thinking about it, are there any things you've learnt about how you go about approaching another teacher who you may not know? How do you help them? It's a different thing to teaching.

A. What I would suggest is, unless the LEA is pretty proactive, and it seems as though **the role of the LEA is diminishing anyway in pro AST terms, and if the funding is not going to go through them they're not going to be best in coordinating it.***[negative about LEA involvement now and in future]* So it really is coming back to the ASTs all the time isn't it, **to sort it out themselves in a way.** *[need for autonomy and initiative if LEA does not supply]* My advice is, as soon as you get that job send out some letters. That's what I did, I sent some letters out to the local schools and said, look, this is who I am, this is what I do, can I be of any help, is there anything I can do, I can design . . . I've gone in and made resources or I've done schemes of work for the various schools; and a lot of schools say – again it's primaries – no one's a science specialist here, how do you teach for electricity or how do you teach forces, it all depends on the topics, so I'll come in and again I can give schemes of work, give some ideas for resources, I can do a few demo lessons.*[repertoire of work]* Because I've been doing it for so long now **I've got this pool of regulars** *[local network and reputation what about getting new work?]* that I'm interacting with.

Q. Do you get a better response from primary than a secondary would you say?

A. **Primary seek you out, you have to seek the secondary out, that's the way it works.** And again, there's another school that's in special measures that I'm going to go to this term but again it's me making the contact with them and the feeling is all right, come along, **they don't particularly want your help but the LEA is saying 'you've got to have it' I think.** That's the message I'm receiving, whereas primaries **they're sort of desperate.***[Primaries easier to get into because they want subject expertise. Secondary work harder to find maybe imposed/unwelcome. Go back to who asks and if the reason for AST input is seen as correctional]*

Q. They welcome you with open arms?

A. Yes, which is understandable. I suppose if they're arts or English graduates **they just haven't got the expertise or the resources,***[this could mean expensive equipment for science. See also D&T teacher lending sewing machines]* they get a bit desperate on how to teach certain topics, whereas **in the secondary school you've always got specialists so they're thinking, well, what's he going to be able to teach me or tell me.***[is this experience of being blocked or empathy. Specialism seen in terms of subject not pedagogy.]*

Q. In this school with special measures was there any sense that people were expecting you to show people how to teach rather than what to teach because in primary you talked about the content; they wouldn't perhaps say it like that?

A. That's the way I look at it. It's **quite surprising** actually because you start, I mean I went into a primary school just last week and the teacher I was in with was **very anti** IT. I said 'oh you've got a digital projector on your ceiling, I'll use that' and she said 'I don't even know if it works' and was **very anti**. But I did the lesson anyway, using it, because I would do anyway and at the end she was 'wow' so perhaps it gave her a few ideas, and **so it's not content based, it's teaching techniques**. *[resistance? teacher ownership? What was gender/age/power relation? Here the excellence is not about science but about ICT]*

Q. Some people say that this idea of the AST to transfer good practice is actually quite hard to show. Have you come across any ways where you've been able to report what you've done or is it quite hard to know what effect you've had?

A. **It is that evaluation process that isn't very easy to do**. It's very anecdotal as well. We did pilot basically a bit of paperwork within the school. We **invented it ourselves**, of evaluation forms after you've done outreach work, then at the end of term, but some come back and it was **pretty positive stuff; it's a record that you've done it and that was partly the reason for doing it**, so you can keep an eye on it. But some schools didn't bother, you never got it back, **you're chasing this bit of bureaucracy** around and you think well, is it worth it. *[similar finding on evaluation as difficult. Reluctance to be accountable]*

Q. That's given me a good range of examples of the kind of work that you do. Is there anything else at all that you think I should have asked you or that you want to tell me about what the role is.

A. I do **national** things as well, it's not just within the county. *[source of pride ambassador, opportunity to share good practice, update]* Last week I went to the BECTA show and I did a talk for the Specialist Schools Trust, so I'm doing things like that as well.

Q. One other thing that you might have a view on: there's supposed to be a national electronic forum for ASTs and a few years ago I asked a few people in the survey if they were using it and nobody was; and I've been trying to get a look at it and they were very reluctant to let me do that saying it hasn't really got going yet, I am not surprised because I know at the OU we have these e-discussion groups but it can take a while to get people on it. Have you got any interest or come across it at all?

A. I got a flyer probably a couple of years ago now, when it was first taking off **and I thought that's a good idea so I set up an account,** I even put a picture of myself on there and said what my interests were and what I regarded my specialism to be. **But having visited it a few times a few months later there was nothing going on on it. So I've not accessed it since.** *[National E conference is not active even though he tried.]* These discussion groups are only as good as who takes part really and how well they're used, and if they don't get used they're no good at all. That's my experience of it. I did the first step.

Q. At least you went on it. If they let me on I'll see your picture. Thanks very much for talking to me. It's all obvious stuff to you but it's not obvious to me because I don't think it is obvious how you go about working with other schools and other colleagues and we don't know how the teaching role is going to change so that's why I thought it was worth documenting what people are doing.